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"We'd had massive success and wanted to destroy it in front of the fans"

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD

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CLASSIC POP
NOVEMBER 2025
ISSUE 98
PRICE £7

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

SIMPLE MINDS

"THE BAND ALWAYS BELIEVED WE WERE GOING TO ASCEND AGAIN – AND IT'S HAPPENED!"

Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill on their lifelong bromance and *Once Upon A Time*'s 40th anniversary reissue

OMD *CRUSH* IT IN THE STATES

"Goddamn you 26-year-old geniuses! How did you do that?"

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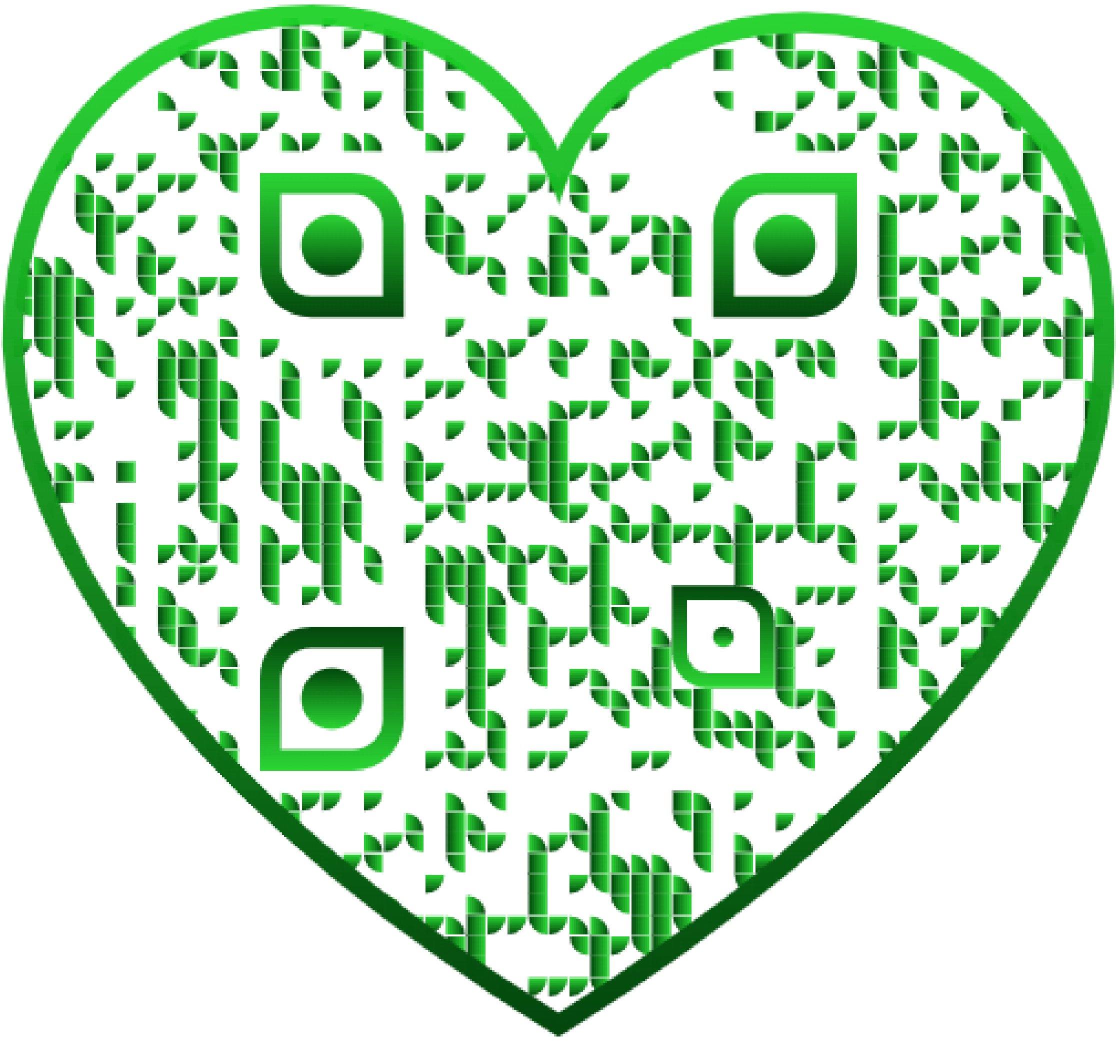

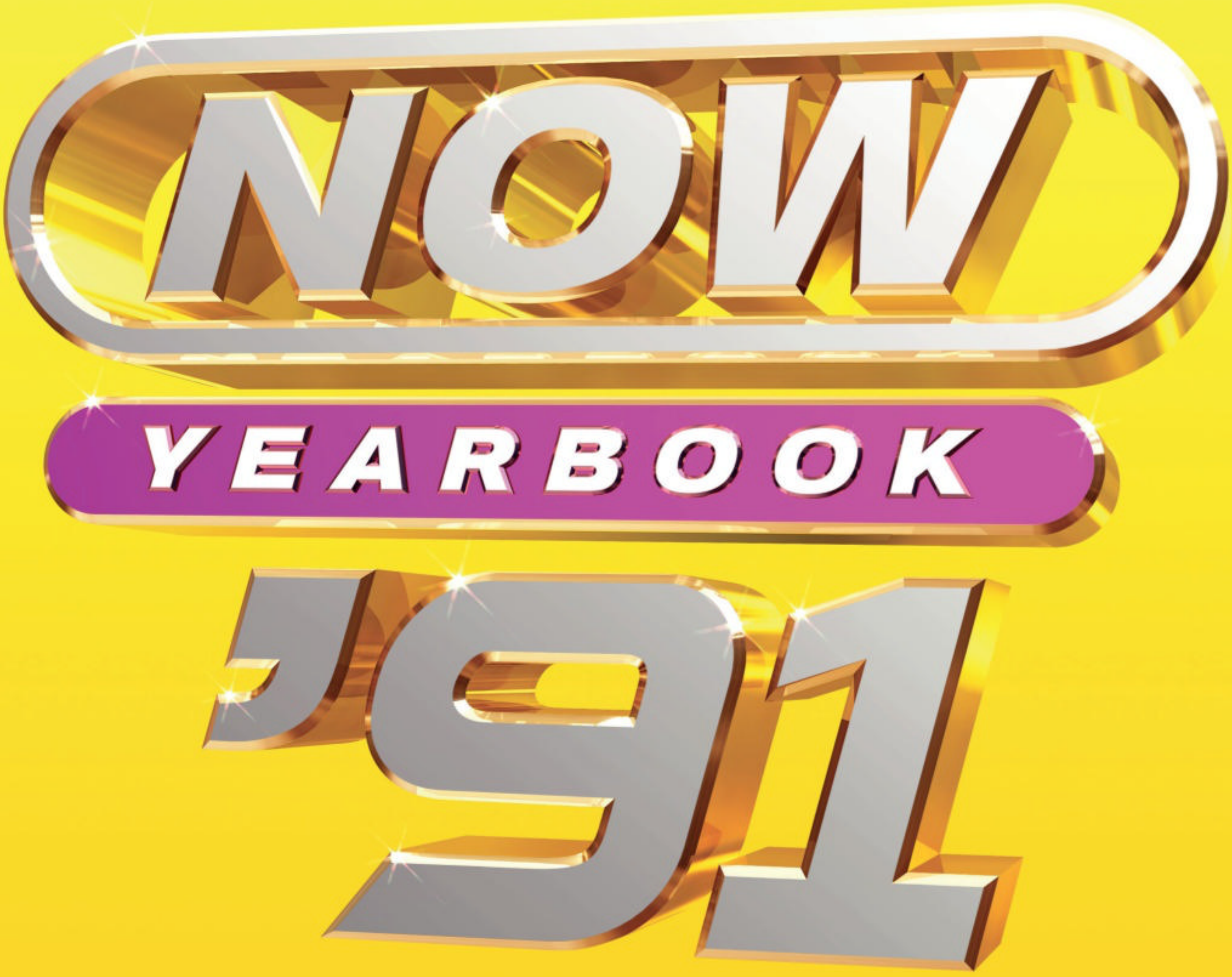
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WELCOME

Squint a bit and you might be able to discern something of a running theme emerging through the dry ice amongst our big-hitter artist features this month – the vital role that songwriting duos play in music.

Our new issue's cover stars Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill – Simple Minds' Glaswegian engine room – have known each other since they were little kids. They've been each other's staunchest ally through thick and thin over the years.

Their creative brotherhood is an enduring one, that rarest of beasts in the choppy waters of the music business where the pressures of fame can unpick even the tightest of bonds.

Meanwhile, the ongoing partnership of Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys remains the creative hub behind synth-pop innovators OMD. This issue, Andy tells us of the pressure cooker atmosphere that birthed the group's sixth album, *Crush*. It was the record that finally saw the group make a name for themselves in the US. And when the chips were down, Andy and Paul more than delivered. In fact, 40 years on, *Crush* is an album that only seems to have improved with age.

Elsewhere, Marc Almond and Dave Ball take us inside *The Art Of Falling Apart*, Soft Cell's twisted masterpiece that found the subversive pair rebelling against their mainstream status following the triumph of debut LP, *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*.

Not for them the usual promo treadmill of a chart-friendly pop turn. "We viewed success differently to a lot of our peers. For us, it wasn't about wearing party hats or getting thrown into a pool of foam on *Tiswas*," explains an irked Marc Almond to *CP*. Seemingly, The Phantom Flan Flinger was never destined to make it onto the Soft Cell frontman's Christmas card list.

Inevitably, due to the white heat of creativity needed to keep groups at the toppermost of the poppermost, there will be those songwriting duos that burn out before their time. Our latest classic album feature finds Eurythmics at the peak of their powers, knocking out melodic gems with some A-list collaborators at a quite astonishing rate of knots for *Be Yourself Tonight*. In less than five years, it would all be over – for the first time at least – for Annie and Dave. We've seen a brief reunion and a Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame induction appearance, but how great would it be if that particular dynamic duo were fully back in action…

Enjoy the issue!

Steve

Steve Harnell, Senior Editor
Follow me on X (Twitter): @steve_harnell

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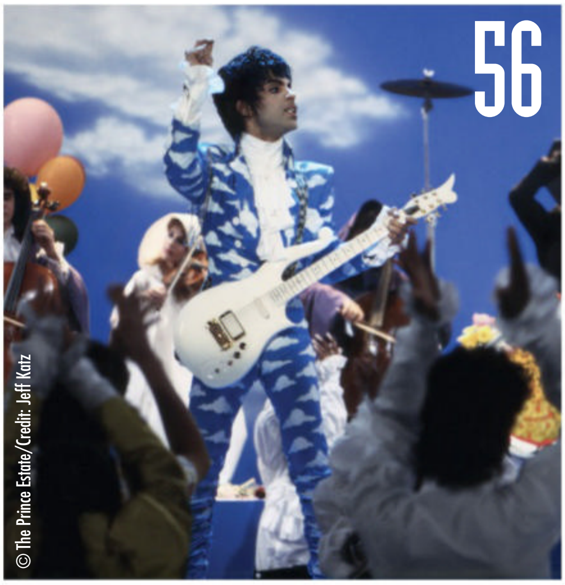

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Anthem Publishing
Media House, 1 Widcombe
Parade, Bath BA2 4JT
www.classicpopmag.com

Newsstand cover image:
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All magazine images
© Getty, except where stated

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*1 "A throbbing bassline, crashing drums and Jim Kerr in full pomp mode. Irresistible."

*2 "A catchy slice of 90s Celtic rock cake. Big sound, big band, big hit."

*3 "Often lost in the shadow of the huge hits that came before, this one's just as epic."

*4 "It still sounds like the future."

*5 "With its euphoric sense of hope and evocative talk of brilliant days and golden day memories, this is peak Simple Minds in every sense."

*6 "Anyone who only knows Simple Minds as '*The Breakfast Club* band' should explore their more arty, experimental back catalogue, including this sublime art-rock racket."

*7 "Sleek pop showing the band at their funkiest."

*8 "Where art and arena met…"

*9 "It captures the sense of looking to Europe for influences at a time when this was hugely exotic."

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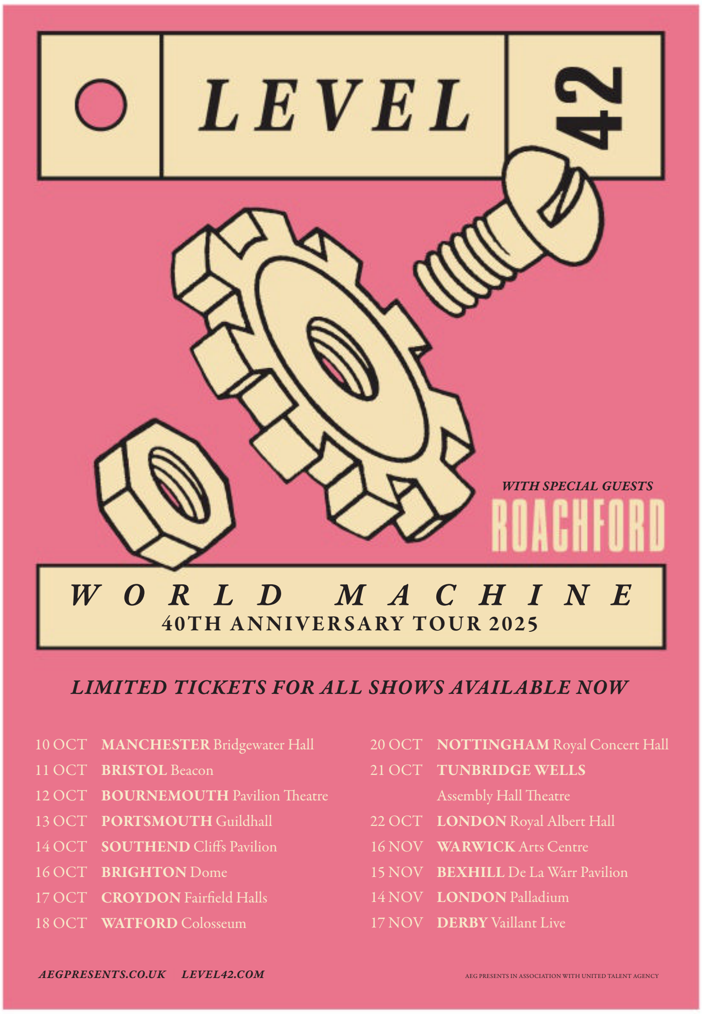
OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Paul Kirkley makes his living from interviewing famous people with much more interesting and glamorous lives than his own. In our new issue, Paul catches up with Simple Minds' Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill for a career-spanning cover feature as they release a joint autobiography and celebrate the 40th anniversary of the band's landmark album, *Once Upon A Time*.

The winner of the Best Writer, Specialist category, in 2022's British Society of Magazine Editors Awards, *CP*'s Reviews Editor **John Earls** meets Soft Cell's Marc Almond and Dave Ball to take a trip into the dark heart of the synth-pop duo's second album *The Art Of Falling Apart* as it receives the expanded deluxe reissue treatment.

Annie Zaleski has penned a best-selling book about Taylor Swift and a *33 1/3* book on Duran Duran's *Rio*, contributes music writing to *The Guardian*, and always longs to time travel back to 1984. In this issue of *Classic Pop*, she chats with the ever-delightful Andy McCluskey about OMD's US breakthrough LP *Crush* and reviews albums from ABC, The Dream Syndicate and Carly Rae Jepsen.

SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES **+44 (0)1371 853609** *classicpopmag@anthem.co.uk*
PRINTING **William Gibbons & Son** *Tel* +44 (0)1902 730011 DISTRIBUTION **Marketforce UK** 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 6QA
LICENSING ENQUIRIES **Regina Erak** *Telephone* +44 (0)7753 811622 *regina.erak@gmail.com*



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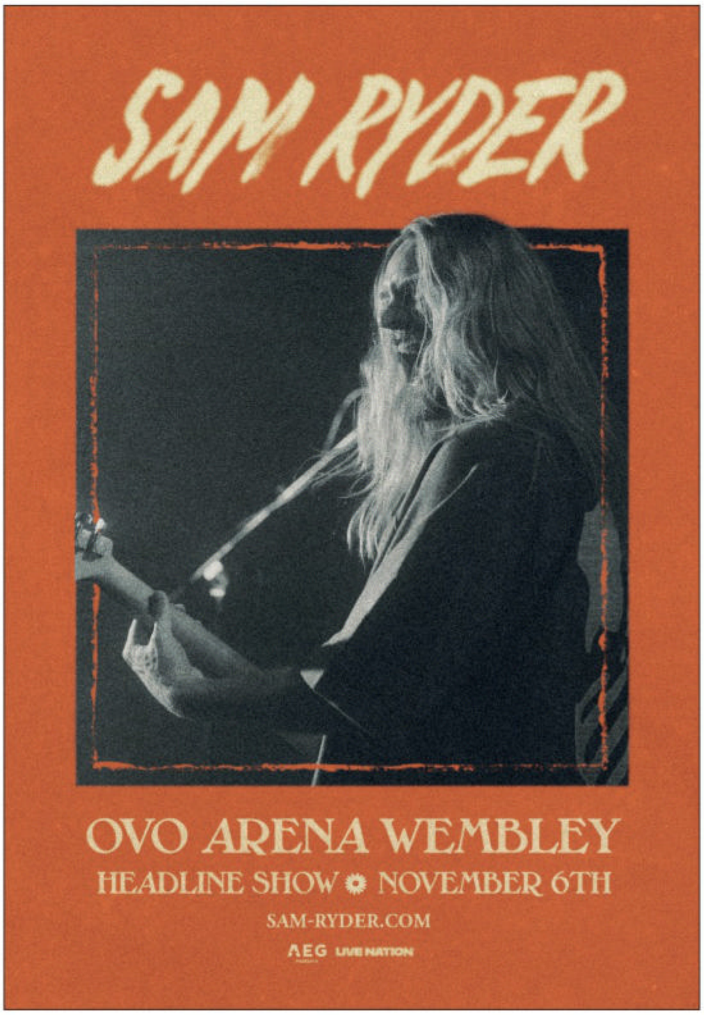

SAM RYDER

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OBITUARY

STEPHEN LUSCOMBE

29 OCTOBER 1954 – 13 SEPTEMBER 2025

Blancmange's Stephen Luscombe died on 13 September at the age of 70. Co-founder Neil Arthur paid tribute to him on the group's social media, writing, "Heartbroken. RIP Stephen. Love you forever."

Luscombe was born in Middlesex on 29 October 1954. He studied at the University of Westminster's Harrow School of Art in London, and the duo first bonded over a shared admiration for Brian Eno, Can, Captain Beefheart and Frank Zappa. Luscombe and Arthur went on to form Blancmange at the tail end of the 1970s.

When *Classic Pop* met the pair in 2017, they were in a reflective mood, laughing about the name 'Blancmange'. "Even today I cannot believe that we did it," Luscombe said. "We weren't ambitious; we were just having a laugh and getting paid for it!"

In 1980, they explored an experimental approach with the release of their debut *Irene & Mavis* EP. After their instrumental track *Sad Day* appeared on the compilation *Some Bizzare Album*, they signed to London Records and, having enjoyed minor success with their 1982 double A-side single *God's Kitchen/I've Seen The Word*, their mainstream breakthrough came in the autumn of 1982, when *Living On The Ceiling* reached No.7 on the UK Singles Chart. The duo went on to achieve further hits with *Waves* (No.19), *Blind Vision* (No.10), and *Don't Tell Me* (No.8), releasing three acclaimed studio albums: *Happy Families* (1982), 1984's *Mange Tout*, and the following year's *Believe You Me*.

"Me and Stephen, we're like chalk and cheese," Arthur told *Classic Pop* in that same 2017 interview. "When that's constructive it's really good, but when it's destructive you haven't got a chance. I could see something was wrong."

After seven years of making music together, Blancmange decided to prioritise their friendship over their career and announced their split in June 1986.

A quarter of a century later, though, Blancmange reunited and released their fourth studio album, *Blanc Burn*, in March 2011. However, Luscombe was unable to tour because of an abdominal aortic aneurysm. "I got pretty ill," he told *Classic Pop*. "I had angina, so had to watch my blood pressure. Touring was out – I'd just be too nervous."

When Luscombe stepped back, Arthur continued recording and performing under the Blancmange name.

Classic Pop extends its condolences to Stephen's family, friends and fans.

PET SHOP BOYS / DISCO 5

PET SHOP BOYS ADD TO THEIR DISCO SERIES

Pet Shop Boys have announced details of the latest instalment in their *Disco* album series.

The first three *Disco* albums primarily featured remixes of Pet Shop Boys' songs by other producers and DJs, with *Disco* released in 1986, followed by *Disco 2* in 1994 and *Disco 3* in 2003. Then, in 2007, *Disco 4* showcased Pet Shop Boys' remixes of other artists, including Madonna and The Killers.

Across its 12 tracks, *Disco 5* features 10 recent PSB remixes of songs by artists as varied as Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, Primal Scream, Paul Weller, Wolfgang Tillmans, Tina Turner, Claptone, and more, along with a remix of their own *Dreamland* featuring Olly Alexander.

The album also includes the PSB Symphonic mix of *I'm In Love With A German Film Star* by Sam Taylor-Johnson, and Carroll Thompson's *Let The Music Play*, arranged and produced by PSB in the early 90s for the soundtrack of the hit movie *The Crying Game*.

Also featured are Neil Tennant and Chris Lowe's remix of Sleaford Mods' cover of *West End Girls*, as well as the PSB-Soft Cell collaboration *Purple Zone*.

Disco 5 will be released on 21 November via Parlophone Records and is available on black or orange vinyl, CD and digital formats. Visit petshopboys.co.uk for further details.

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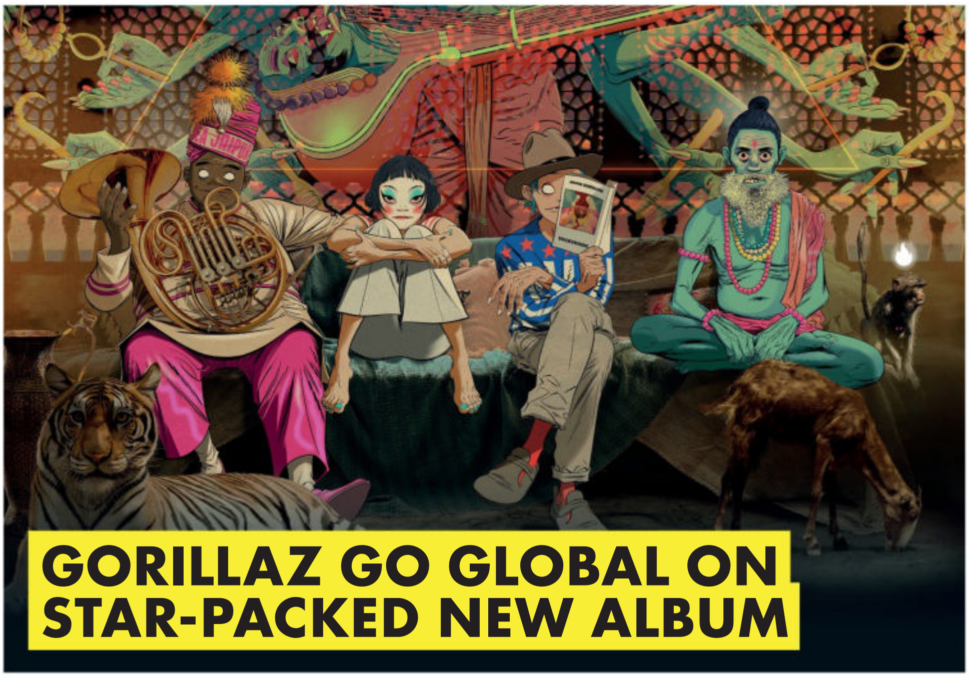
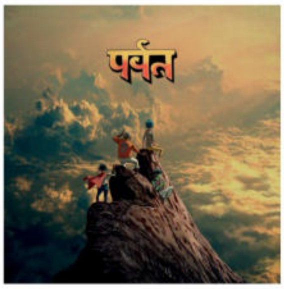


GORILLAZ GO GLOBAL ON STAR-PACKED NEW ALBUM

Gorillaz will release their ninth studio album, *The Mountain*, next March through their own label, KONG. Including performances in Arabic, English, Hindi, Spanish and Yoruba, the collection features 15 new songs and an extensive list of guest artists and collaborators. These include: Anoushka Shankar, Asha Bhosle, Gruff Rhys, IDLES and Johnny Marr, as well as Paul Simonon, Sparks and Yasiin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def), alongside the voices of Bobby Womack, De La Soul's Dave Jolicoeur, Dennis Hopper and Mark E. Smith.



The Mountain is a truly global affair – in addition to UK-based recordings at Studio 13 in London and Devon, further sessions took place in India, Turkmenistan, Syria and the US.

Released on 20 March, *The Mountain* will be available as a digital download, CD, deluxe 2CD, vinyl and limited-edition boxset.

Gorillaz will also play arenas across the UK and Ireland next spring. The Mountain Tour kicks off in Manchester on 21 March, with stops in Birmingham, Glasgow, Leeds, Cardiff, Nottingham, Liverpool, Belfast and Dublin; plus a headline show at London's Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Saturday 20 June, supported by Trueno and Sparks.

Ron and Russell Mael, who appear on the album's lead single *The Happy Dictator*, recently revealed *MADDER!*, a four-song companion EP to their 26th studio album, *MAD!*

Released on 3 October, formats include CD, black vinyl and picture disc.

PROPAGANDA
a secret sense of rhythm
a secret sense of sin

Propaganda's ZTT years compiled

A new six-disc boxset *A Secret Sense Of Rhythm: A Secret Sense Of Sin* will celebrate Propaganda's three years on the ZTT label.

Disc one, 'Secret', is an encyclopedic edition of their debut album *A Secret Wish*, while disc two, 'Stahlnetz', is an expanded collection of remix LP *Wishful Thinking*.

CD three, 'Singlette', features Propaganda's three specially edited EPs (originally released only on cassette), all with unique versions, mixes and sequences, while CD four, 'Series', gathers the group's contributions to ZTT's *Action*, *Incidental* and *Fatal* series.

The 6CD set will be rounded out with 'Studio', a behind-the-scenes listen to Propaganda at work in Sarm Studios across 1984 and 1985, and '(Some Kind Of) Single', a previously unreleased version of *Dr. Mabuse* from the 1987 movie *Some Kind Of Wonderful*, alongside mixes created for TV and video.

Two companion formats will also be available: a limited 1LP vinyl edition remixed by David Kosten, and a Blu-ray featuring a new Dolby Atmos mix.

BUNNYMEN HOP ON THE TOUR BUS

Echo & The Bunnymen will hit the road for a nationwide tour in 2026. The Very Best of Echo & The Bunnymen 1978-2026 – More Songs To Learn And Sing, will celebrate the tracks that have brought the band 20 Top 20 hits and nine Top 20 albums.

Opening at Norwich UEA on 4 March, the tour will take in Warrington, Leeds, Manchester, Bristol, Brighton and London, followed by a homecoming show at Liverpool's Empire as well as dates in Cambridge, Bournemouth, Birmingham, Nottingham and Edinburgh, before concluding on 4 April at Newcastle's O2 City Hall.

Fans can expect to hear a career-spanning set including highlights from their classic albums *Crocodiles*, *Heaven Up Here*, *Porcupine* and *Ocean Rain*.

For tickets, visit bunnymen.com.

Black Grape's Shaun Ryder and Paul "Kermit" Leveridge celebrate 30 years of *It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah* with a UK tour this autumn

© Paul Husband

SHAUN RYDER

Q+A

IN 1995, SHAUN RYDER HAD BEEN WRITTEN OFF AS YESTERDAY'S MAN. WITH THE HAPPY MONDAYS BEHIND HIM IN THE REAR VIEW MIRROR, NOBODY EXPECTED THE SINGER TO RETURN WITH A NEW BAND AND A NO.1 ALBUM. YET THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HE DID. HERE HE TALKS TO *CLASSIC POP* ABOUT THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF BLACK GRAPE'S PLATINUM-SELLING DEBUT LP, *IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT...YEAH*

STEVE O'BRIEN

Released on 7 August 1995, *It's Great When You're Straight... Yeah* was, in Shaun Ryder's words, his great "fuck you" album after the dissolution of Happy Mondays. Still battling drug problems, and with Madchester now in the past, not much was expected of Ryder's next project, that is if he was even *compos mentis* enough to get one together. But teaming up with former Ruthless Rap Assassin member Paul "Kermit" Leveridge and old buddy Bez would prove a masterstroke and their first LP together as Black Grape would become the singer's first No.1 record, while also producing hit singles in *Reverend Black Grape*, *In The Name Of The Father* and *Kelly's Heroes*. To mark this album's Pearl Anniversary, he and Kermit are going back on the road this November and December for an 11-date mini-tour.

What does *It's Great When You're Straight...Yeah* mean to you, 30 years on?

When the Mondays split, the rest of the band were saying about me and Bez, "Those two fookin' losers, dancing with Zippy and Bungle, where's their career goin'?" I mean, we kept it really quiet what we were doing, and so when [the album] came out and went to No.1, it was like, "Fuck off!!" So I've got very fond memories of it, even though, despite it being called *It's Great When You're Straight...*, we were all off our tits.

So you must have felt somewhat vindicated, having such massive success – even bigger than anything you had experienced with Happy Mondays.

It was the best feeling in the world. We knew he had something special. We were signed by Gary Kerr first. He was American and so he was going through the US market. See, at the time, we'd have done it a bit more hip-hop, but in America, there weren't many white kids doing hip-hop with Black kids. So we would hand songs in, and he wanted everything a bit more guitar-oriented, so he could sell it to an American audience.

> "I'VE GOT VERY FOND MEMORIES OF THE ALBUM, EVEN THOUGH, DESPITE IT BEING CALLED *IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT...*, WE WERE ALL OFF OUR TITS"

What was the vibe like when you started Black Grape, compared to those final few years with the Mondays?

It was a totally new thing for me, because I'd never worked with professional musicians before. You know, all of the Mondays were self-taught. Black Grape really was me and Kermit and then the rest were session guys, apart from Wags [the late Paul Wagstaff, guitarist, who died in March this year]. It was Danny Saber who played most of the parts on that record, but when you take an album out on the road, you gotta put a band together to play it. So there were all these session guys, and that was the first time I'd ever played with proper musicians, who could keep time and knew what they were doing. It was a piece of piss on stage for me, so it was great and we became like a family and a proper band. Eventually, it ended up everyone getting off their nut and partying... apart from Ged [Lynch], the drummer.

However, Black Grape, in its first incarnation, split in 1998 after releasing your second album, *Stupid Stupid Stupid*.
For Kermit, it was his first time with things like *Top Of The Pops* and being famous. You handle that in different ways, and he was getting a lot of stuff like, "You can fuck him off! You can be like Tupac!" and he started swallowing that. So by the time we were doing the second album, he'd had all this shit going in his ear, and he wasn't turning up, so it was time to pack it in.

You're going on the road with this album, but you've told us before your memory isn't great with your own lyrics…
Imagine this, like you wrote a book or a novel, and you go onto the stage without that book and you have to recite every fucking word of it! I am ADHD and I don't retain information. Learning's all about remembering, and if you're not going to remember shit, what the teachers are telling you, you're not going to get a fucking A-level. Might be good for the pub quiz, but it's not going to pass any exams. I was easily distracted. If there are teachers in a class, I'm over there looking at pigeons.

So even if you listen and re-listen to your songs before a show, the words still don't go in?
Nah, I have an autocue. Even if I listen to them constantly, it wouldn't make a blind bit of difference. I've had autocue for years and years now but before that, I used to have the lyrics written on the stage floor.

Will Bez be joining you on the road for this tour?
Bez doesn't do Black Grape now. He wasn't there towards the end of the band, though he started off in it. We've got the Mondays going at the same time as Black Grape and Mantra Of The Cosmos, so Bez stays out of Black Grape, but he's in the other two.

What's the situation with the Happy Mondays at the moment? It's been a traumatic few years for the group with your brother Paul dying [the bass player passed away in 2022] and Rowetta leaving.
The Mondays now is great. Up to recently, we didn't have a really happy firm, but Black Grape's always been a pleasure. We've been at it for 10 years with the same line-up. I mean, Kermit and I don't argue over stupid fookin' drug-related bullshit. Even though we're not off our tits now, we're still the same. We write exactly the same and we both still like a drink when we're in the studio, so it's better than ever. I mean, I get asked all the time, do I miss those days, and I'm like, "no I fookin' don't". I was happy doing all the shit that comes with being young and mad, but now I'm happy being an old c*nt who's a bit boring, who just goes back after the fucking gig to watch the news.

Ruthless Rap Assassins' Kermit joined Ryder in Black Grape after Happy Mondays disbanded in 1993

You've released two Black Grape albums since reforming in 2015, but we haven't had a new Mondays record since 2007's *Uncle Dysfunktional*. Is there one planned?
After I've done the Black Grape tour, I've got to start writing the new Mondays album. I actually should have gone in the studio about a month ago to start writing tracks.

And then there's your other group, Manta Of The Cosmos, which you're in with Bez, Zak Starkey and Andy Bell. You've released a few singles, but is there a full album in the offing?
We've already got an album there! We've got about 50 tracks, so at the moment Zak is just trying to find a deal to see whoever puts it out.

In August 1995, Black Grape's debut studio LP, *It's Great When You're Straight… Yeah*, replaced Supergrass' *I Should Coco* at the top of the UK charts

You're celebrating 30 years of *It's Great When You're Straight… Yeah*, but 2027 will be the 40th anniversary of the first Mondays album, *Squirrel And G-Man*. Any plans to tour that LP?
That album is so hard to play. We didn't know what we were doing. John Cale came and produced that. Thinking about it, he must have just been in his late thirties or early forties, and all the madness of his younger days in The Velvet Underground he'd knocked out of the window. So he was very straight, eating tangerines and watching the news. He was like the schoolteacher and we were the glue-sniffing kids. John basically pressed play and record, so what he got with that album was basically us live at the time. I mean, we've tried – we brought out a couple of the tracks, the ones that we can do, into the greatest hits set. But yeah, I'd love to go out and do a tour of that album.

And finally, what's the deal on the big screen biopic you were teasing a few years ago?
Matt Greenhalgh, who wrote the Amy Winehouse one [*Back To Black*] and the Joy Division film [*Control*], wanted to direct it, but he didn't like what the Yanks – who put half the money in – wanted to do with it, which was basically turn it into that format that they do with these sort of films. So now it's going to be a documentary supposedly. They're the big thing now, aren't they. ■

● **Tickets for Black Grape's *It's Great When You're Straight… Yeah* tour are available from crosstownconcerts.seetickets.com/tour/black-grape**

MACCA SPREADS WINGS ACROSS NEW ANTHOLOGY

Wings have announced a comprehensive self-titled anthology collection, personally overseen by Paul McCartney.

Released on 7 November, *WINGS* is available in an array of formats – including a 3LP limited-edition coloured vinyl collection, as well as 1CD and 1LP versions – and features the hits *Band On The Run, Live And Let Die, Jet, Let 'Em In* and more.

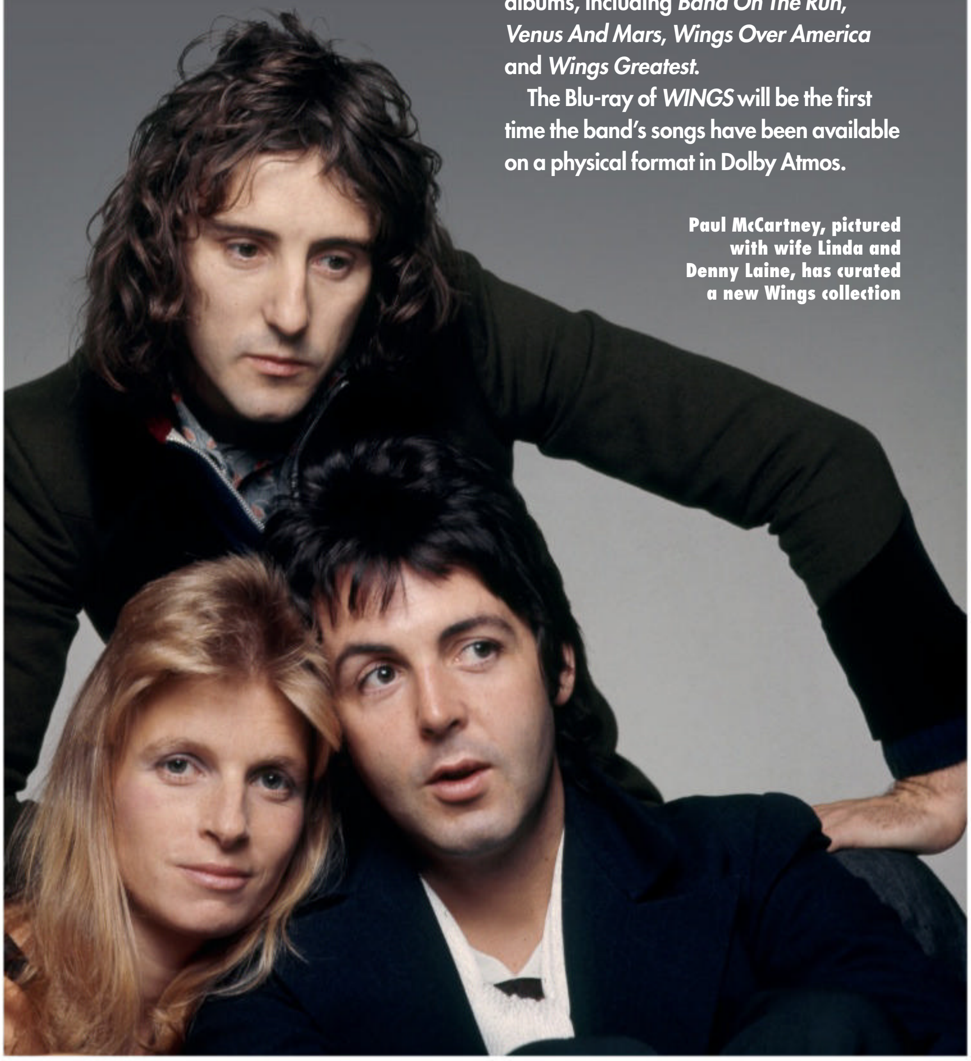
All physical formats come with a booklet boasting an introduction from McCartney. 3LP and 2CD editions include an expanded 32-page booklet featuring photographs, artwork, paintings, trivia and information about the band.

WINGS
WINGS

The artwork for *WINGS* was overseen by Paul alongside Aubrey 'Po' Powell of Hipgnosis – the iconic design studio that worked with Paul on seven Wings albums, including *Band On The Run, Venus And Mars, Wings Over America* and *Wings Greatest.*

The Blu-ray of *WINGS* will be the first time the band's songs have been available on a physical format in Dolby Atmos.

Paul McCartney, pictured with wife Linda and Denny Laine, has curated a new Wings collection



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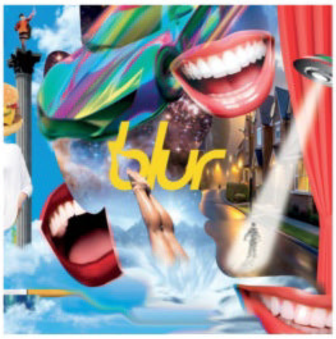


ANNIVERSARY REISSUE OF BLUR'S NO.1 ESCAPE ACT

A half-speed mastered double-disc coloured vinyl edition of Blur's *The Great Escape* is being released to mark the album's 30th anniversary.

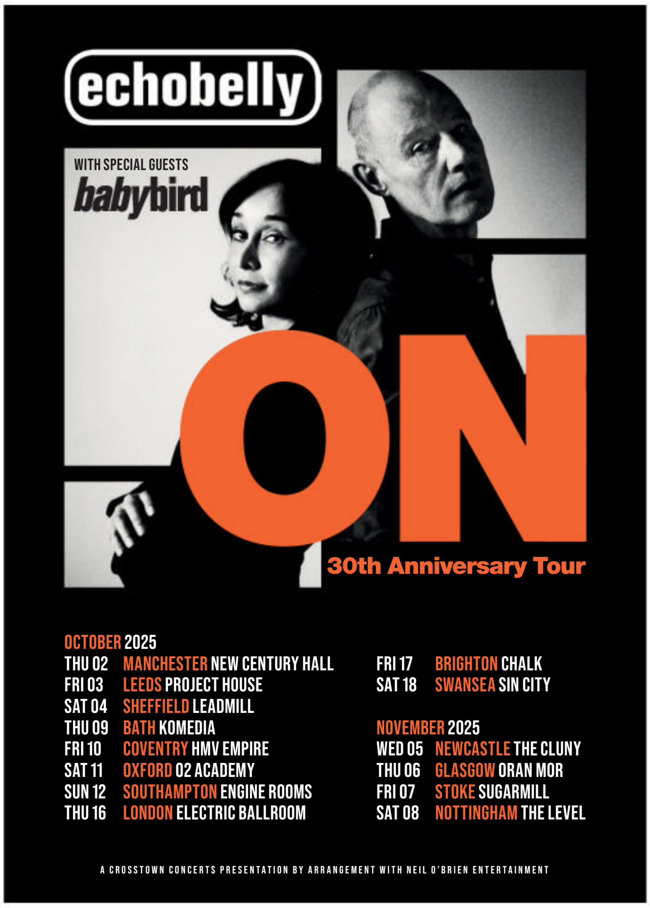
Out on 12 December via Parlophone, the reissue of the band's fourth studio LP features the 15-song standard album along with a collection of rare B-sides and bonus tracks from the era, several of which are previously unreleased on vinyl.

The follow-up to their international breakthrough, 1994's *Parklife, The Great Escape* debuted at No.1 on the UK Albums Chart and spawned a run of hit singles such as *Country House, The Universal, Stereotypes* and *Charmless Man.*

Housed in a gatefold sleeve with all-new expanded artwork by artist and designer Tony Hung, the reprint will be pressed on yellow and turquoise vinyl.

***The Great Escape* has been expanded to include B-sides and rarities**

© Kevin Westenberg



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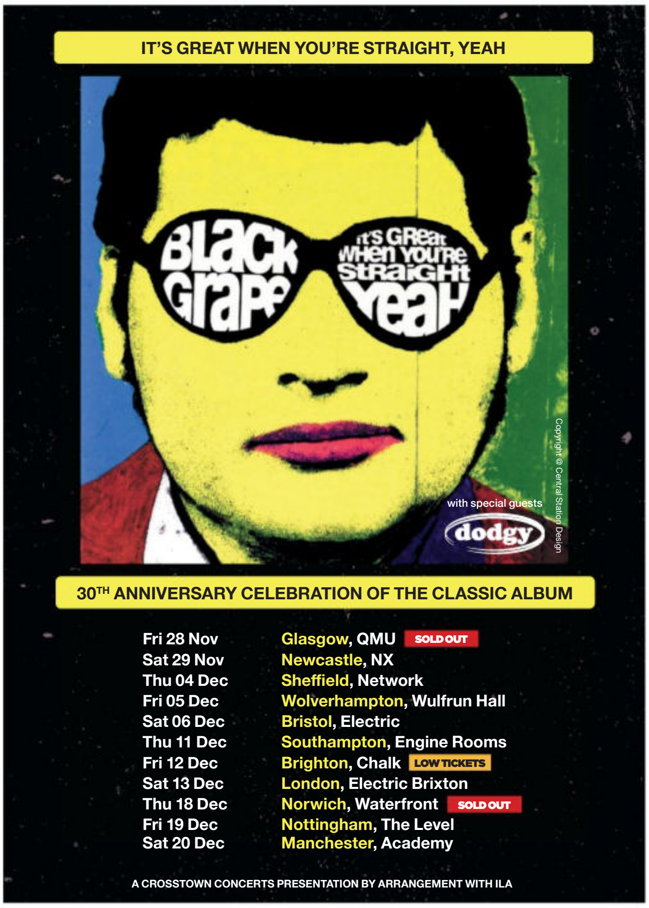

IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT, YEAH

BLACK GRAPE
IT'S GREAT WHEN YOU'RE STRAIGHT YEAH

with special guests
dodgy

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30TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE CLASSIC ALBUM

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Sat 29 Nov Newcastle, NX
Thu 04 Dec Sheffield, Network
Fri 05 Dec Wolverhampton, Wulfrun Hall
Sat 06 Dec Bristol, Electric
Thu 11 Dec Southampton, Engine Rooms
Fri 12 Dec Brighton, Chalk LOW TICKETS
Sat 13 Dec London, Electric Brixton
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Sat 20 Dec Manchester, Academy

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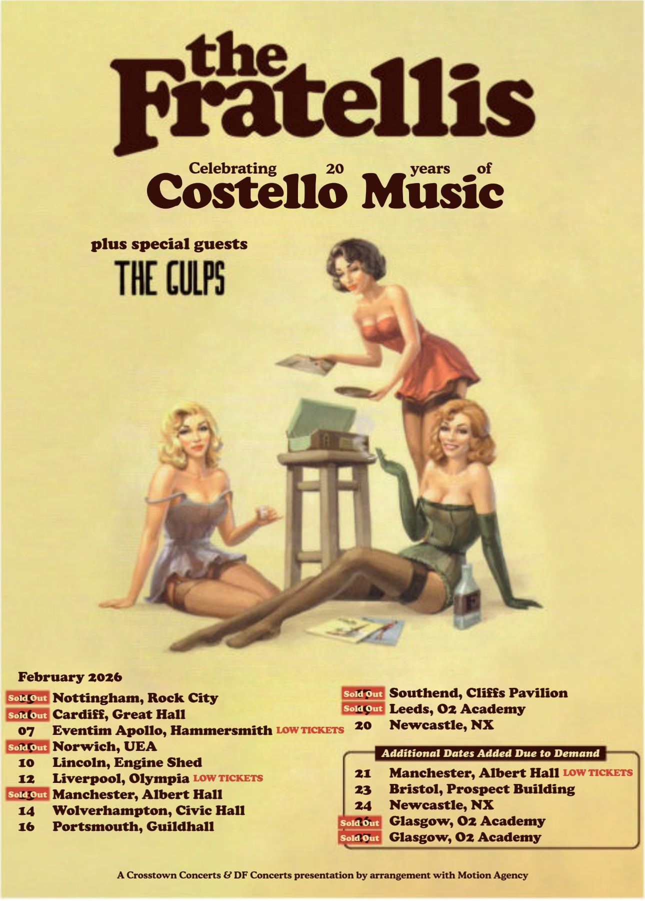

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12 Liverpool, Olympia LOW TICKETS
Sold Out Manchester, Albert Hall
14 Wolverhampton, Civic Hall
16 Portsmouth, Guildhall
Sold Out Southend, Cliffs Pavilion
Sold Out Leeds, O2 Academy
20 Newcastle, NX

Additional Dates Added Due to Demand
21 Manchester, Albert Hall LOW TICKETS
23 Bristol, Prospect Building
24 Newcastle, NX
Sold Out Glasgow, O2 Academy
Sold Out Glasgow, O2 Academy

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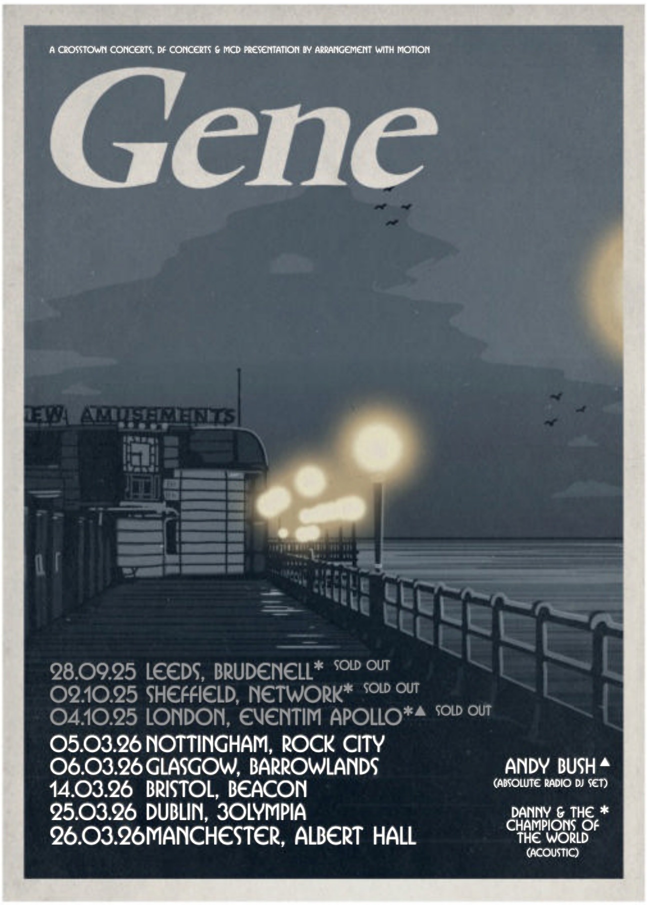

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DANNY & THE CHAMPIONS OF THE WORLD *
(ACOUSTIC)

David Steele, Roland Gift and Andy Cox formed Fine Young Cannibals in 1984 and scored a Top 10 hit with their debut single, *Johnny Come Home*, a year later

© Graham Tucker

ROLAND GIFT

Q+A

FINE YOUNG CANNIBALS BRIEFLY BECAME ONE OF THE BIGGEST BANDS ON THE PLANET AND THEN QUIETLY DISAPPEARED AGAIN. 40 YEARS ON SINCE THEIR FIRST HIT *JOHNNY COME HOME*, LEAD VOCALIST ROLAND GIFT IS BACK SINGING THE SONGS THAT CAPTURED THE LATE 80s ZEITGEIST...

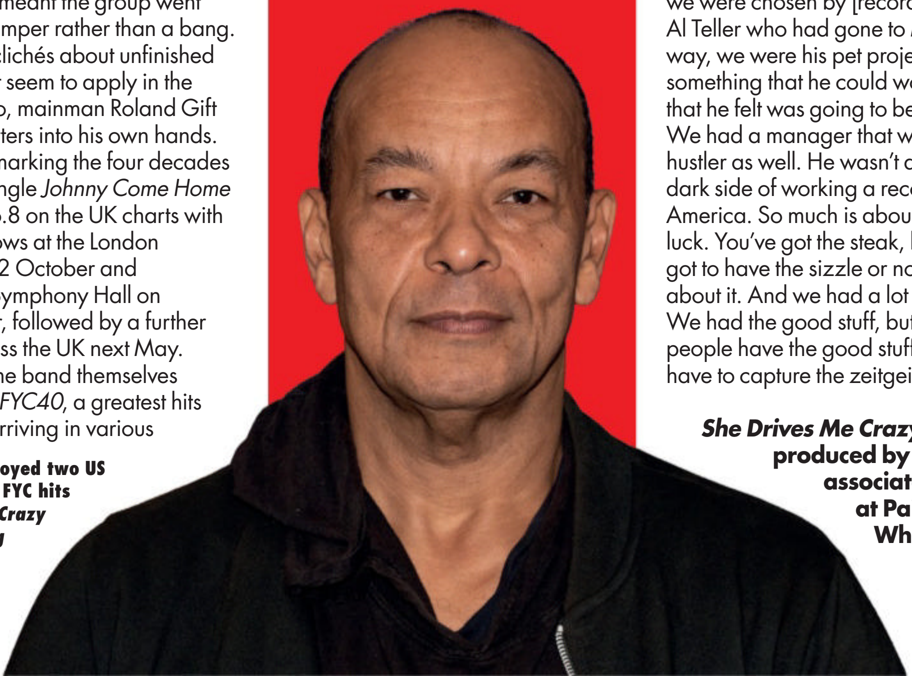
JEREMY ALLEN

It's easy to forget just how big the Fine Young Cannibals were, peaking with two US No.1 singles and a No.1 album with *The Raw & The Cooked* in 1989. Good things appeared to lay in store for the Birmingham trio who'd formed out of the ashes of ska legends The Beat in 1984, but a combination of bad management and a breakdown of relationships during the recording of an ill-fated third album in New York, meant the group went out with a whimper rather than a bang.

While old clichés about unfinished business don't seem to apply in the case of the trio, mainman Roland Gift has taken matters into his own hands. The singer is marking the four decades since debut single *Johnny Come Home* peaked at No.8 on the UK charts with a series of shows at the London Palladium on 2 October and Birmingham Symphony Hall on 12 November, followed by a further six dates across the UK next May. Meanwhile, the band themselves are releasing *FYC40*, a greatest hits compilation arriving in various formats, including a double vinyl LP and an expanded Deluxe 4CD boxset with additional DVD.

2025 has been a good year for the Fine Young Cannibals so far. *She Drives Me Crazy* blew up again on TikTok and the song was chosen for a new Chanel marketing campaign starring Dua Lipa, a sign that the Cannibals are eating at the top table again, at least by proxy. Gift tells *Classic Pop* why he's going it alone once more.

> "WHEN WE GOT TOGETHER, WE WANTED TO CREATE MUSIC THAT WOULD LAST... SO WE DID THAT AND MORE, I GUESS."


Roland Gift enjoyed two US No.1s with the FYC hits *She Drives Me Crazy* and *Good Thing*

How does it feel to be celebrating 40 years of FYC, especially with renewed interest in your oeuvre?
I mean, having had 40 years of one's life gone never to be had again doesn't feel great [laughs]. But when we got together, we did want to create music that would last, because we were listening to music from the 60s and 70s. That was a stated ambition: to create music that people would still want to play. So we did that and more, I guess.

How did you feel when you first saw the Chanel advert featuring one of the world's biggest pop stars singing along to *She Drives Me Crazy*?
It's sort of surreal and seemed to raise the song into a different bracket, like it's a classic or something. You can never be sure that you've created something that's going to be a hit at the time. It just sort of happens and grows until that's what it becomes. I don't normally go for ads, but there was something very cool about that one with Dua Lipa. If there can be anything genuine about advertising, this one sort of felt like it was going to be it.

In 1989, that song was ubiquitous here in the UK, and you were even bigger across the Atlantic. Did you set out to break the US by using the tried-and-tested strategy of touring consistently?
We were very popular in a lot of the former colonies [laughs]. But no, I think we were chosen by [record executive] Al Teller who had gone to MCA. In a way, we were his pet project. It was something that he could work on and that he felt was going to be worthwhile. We had a manager that was quite a hustler as well. He wasn't afraid of the dark side of working a record in America. So much is about timing and luck. You've got the steak, but you've got to have the sizzle or nobody knows about it. And we had a lot of sizzle. We had the good stuff, but a lot of people have the good stuff. You just have to capture the zeitgeist.

***She Drives Me Crazy* was produced by Prince associate David Z at Paisley Park. What did he**

Roland Gift presents Fine Young Cannibals At 40 in London and Birmingham this November, before a six-date UK tour next May

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WIN A SIGNED COPY OF THE *FYC40* 2LP EDITION
SCAN THE QR CODE TO ENTER

London Records celebrates 40 years of Fine Young Cannibals with a new collection, *FYC40*

bring to the record and, more importantly, did you get to hang out with His Purpleness?
No, Prince wasn't there. His guitar was there but he wasn't. David Z was Prince's engineer, so he knew how to work the studio. Sometimes having somebody there who hasn't necessarily contributed anything that you could measure – like they didn't come up with a lyric or they didn't come up with a tune – but their presence can affect the outcome. It's hard to say exactly for sure.

Your voice, and that famous falsetto, is still in good shape. What's your secret?
I haven't overdone it. I did all my drugs before the Cannibals. I'd had a life before FYC, so it wasn't like I was all of a sudden in a sweet shop and ending up with diabetes. When we toured *The Raw & The Cooked* we had a macrobiotic cookbook, and I was doing Tai Chi every day with my bodyguard. There was no heavy drinking or drug taking or anything like that. We didn't tour relentlessly either, because sometimes that can be a bit boring, and people have strategies for coping with that otherworldly situation. I used to swim for Anaconda, the swimming club in Islington, which I did from when I first moved to London. I went there to try to deal with a knee injury. That was something that was a constant for me. I'd always go back to the club.

Other interests outside the band included a successful acting career starring in movies like *Sammy And Rosie Get Laid*. Did that cause a sense of resentment within the band?
I think it did, because I was told by someone at the record company that [bassist] David Steele had asked our manager to get them something. So they did this thing, Two Men, A Drum Machine And A Trumpet [the side project achieved a Top 20 hit with *Tired Of Getting Pushed Around*]. That wasn't really a good move for the sake of the group. I think it was one thing me doing a film, but for them to put a record out... it probably satisfied David and maybe Andy [Cox, guitarist] to an extent, but it created a little bit of a fissure.

Presumably, you still speak with the other members of the group when you're compiling boxsets like *FYC40*? Was there any talk of reforming for this anniversary?
No, there wasn't. We talk through the record company. I see Andy from time to time, but not David.

So, where did it all go wrong for Fine Young Cannibals, then?
I think we fell out of love with each other, and we were victims of our own success. We moved to America to do the third album, because we were based in Birmingham when we did the first one [*Fine Young Cannibals*] and we were based in London when we did the second [*The Raw & The Cooked*]. We used to visit New York a lot but it was different to actually visiting, and it wasn't the best place for creation.

Did you have anyone to knock your heads together?
The manager, Tony Meilandt, was a big drug taker, and you might call him mercurial. He definitely had a destructive nature and he actually ended up destroying himself with crack and then dying in a hotel room. So he was kind of living the rock'n'roll lifestyle more than we were, really.

For many *Classic Pop* readers, your take on *Suspicious Minds* will be the default version – Jimmy Somerville's contribution is still staggering, isn't it?
We were labelmates at London Records, but we liked Bronski Beat and they liked us as well, so it was a genuine link. It wasn't one of those things where the record company throws two people together to make some money, there was a mutual respect. The guy who wrote *Suspicious Minds* [Mark James] sent a letter to us to thank us for our version because he really liked it. And then also, many years later, I bumped into somebody in a club, and she said: 'Oh, I like your version of *Suspicious Minds*' and I said, 'Great, thank you'. And she said: 'My dad would have liked it as well'. And she introduced herself and said 'My name is Lisa Marie' and it was Elvis' daughter. That was kind of a movie moment. ■

● *FYC40* is released on 21 November via London Records and will be reviewed in our next issue. Pre-order now. Tickets are on sale now for Roland Gift Presents FYC 2026 tour. Full details can be found at myticket.co.uk.

1 HIT WONDER

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STEREO
CHECK OUT THE GROOVE
BOBBY THURSTON

CHECK OUT THE GROOVE

BOBBY THURSTON

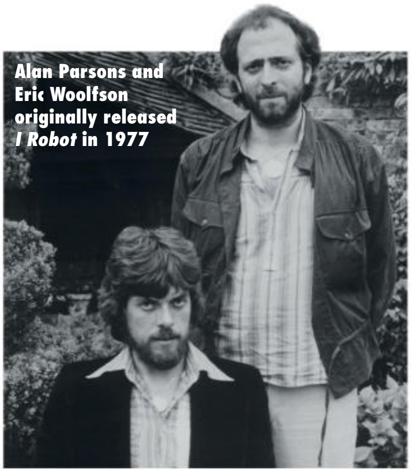
While received wisdom – and North American narrative – dictates that disco died with the infamous backlash of 1979, plenty of irresistible dancefloor singles still hit big as a new decade began, and Washington singer Bobby Thurston had one of the first. Survivors such as Kool & The Gang, Earth, Wind & Fire and Donna Summer still found their way into the higher reaches of the chart at the beginning of the 80s, despite rockist DJs in the States and a handful of New Wave pioneers appealing to the world to cancel it, claiming it was insipid, repetitive and had no agenda.

Initially an epic eight-minute album track, *Check Out The Groove* was cut in half for release and blessed for his straightforwardness – a relentless funk rhythm; clear, rich vocals and great singalong chorus. Given the climate of vitriol and negativity enveloping disco at the time, it was also a gutsy record, in that the entire song was about celebrating and enjoying disco dancing.

Aided by disco-centric radio in the UK and a defiant club scene, the song entered the charts in March 1980 and steadily climbed to the No.10 spot by May. US dance contemporaries including Narada Michael Walden, Leon Haywood and Detroit Spinners were in the Top 20 at the same time, suggesting reports of disco's demise had, in the UK at least, been a tad premature.

MATTHEW RUDD IS THE HOST OF FORGOTTEN 80s ON ABSOLUTE 80s

I ROBOT CONCEPT ALBUM REVISITED


Alan Parsons and Eric Woolfson originally released *I Robot* in 1977

The Alan Parsons Project's second album, *I Robot*, is set to be reissued in a variety of formats, including a limited-edition expanded boxset.

Originally released in July 1977, the LP draws conceptually on Isaac Asimov's science-fiction *Robot* stories, exploring philosophical themes around AI.

One of the duo's three long-players to make the UK Top 30 – alongside 1982's *Eye In The Sky* and 1984's *Ammonia Avenue* – *I Robot* also peaked at No.9 in the United States.

Its release in the US coincided with the first *Star Wars* movie which had hit cinemas three months previously.

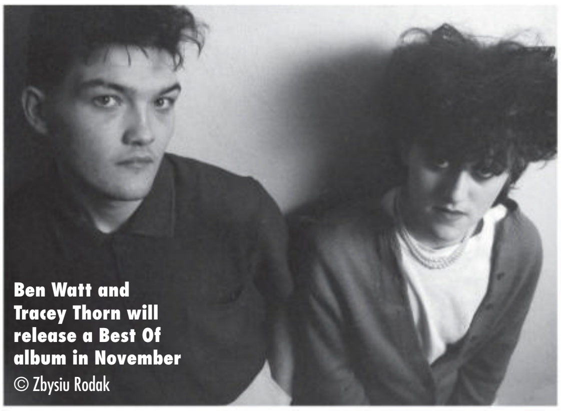
Eric Woolfson said: "We brought out *I Robot* almost exactly at the same time as *Star Wars*. Of course, *Star Wars* featured robots, and the only record sleeves in stores, especially in America, that had a robot on them were ours. Having a robot-like figure on the cover worked very much to our advantage."

The expanded CD release includes a 2025 remaster of the original album by Miles Showell at Abbey Road Studios, plus four bonus tracks and a 12-page booklet. Half-speed remasters are also available on clear and black vinyl.

The super deluxe edition box includes 4CDs containing the Miles Showell remaster plus 70 bonus tracks – 47 previously unreleased – from studio out-takes. Also featured are Dolby Atmos and 5.1 Surround Sound mixes by Alan Parsons, a 180g heavyweight vinyl 2LP set, a fully illustrated casebound book plus a replica original press folder containing a poster, biographies, press photo, press letter and promotional postcard.

EBTG'S DEFINITIVE COMPILATION

Everything But The Girl release a Best Of collection on 14 November via Buzzin' Fly/Chrysalis. From 1982's cult classic *Night And Day* to the contemporary electronica of 2023's *Fuse*, the set spans more than 40 years of Tracey Thorn and Ben Watt's career.


Ben Watt and Tracey Thorn will release a Best Of album in November
© Zbysiu Rodak

"We always liked albums that had a fast side and a slow side," explains Tracey of the compilation's running order, "so we thought we'd start with the bangers and wind down with the ballads."

Opening with Todd Terry's chart-topping remix of *Missing*, the 16-track collection also features *Walking Wounded*, *Single*, *Driving*, *Before Today*, and *Tracey In My Room* – Watt's dancefloor mash-up of EBTG's *Wrong* and Soul Vision's *Come Into My Room*.

"It also makes the album run backwards in time," says Ben. "At the end, we pair the modern day (*Run A Red Light*) with how we started (*Night And Day*)."

***The Best Of Everything But The Girl* will be released on double gatefold vinyl (mastered and cut by Miles Showell at Abbey Road) and CD.**

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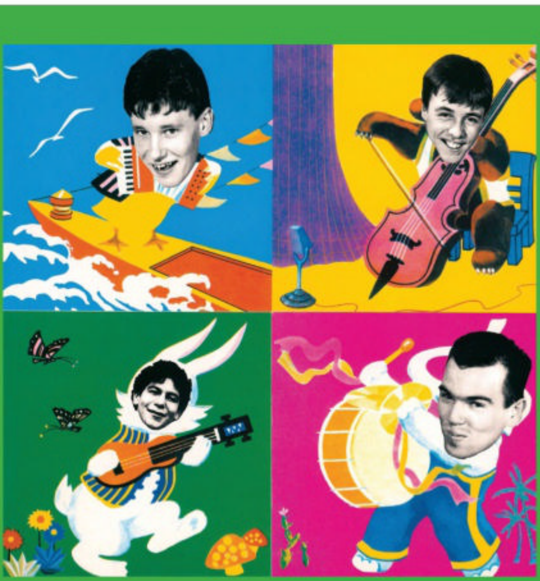

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LOST & FOUND

TENPOLE TUDOR

EDDIE, OLD BOB, DICK AND GARY

TENPOLE TUDOR

With plans to become the new frontman of the Sex Pistols shelved, Ed Tudor Pole returned to his youthful comic punk band and finally, four years after they formed, a chaotically brilliant first album was released.

Tudor Pole's turn in *The Great Rock 'n' Roll Swindle* in 1980 clearly aided his profile, even if the intention to replace Johnny Rotten long-term didn't come through. With *Eddie, Old Bob, Dick And Gary*, he cemented his unfettered New Wave credentials with an additional dollop of humour.

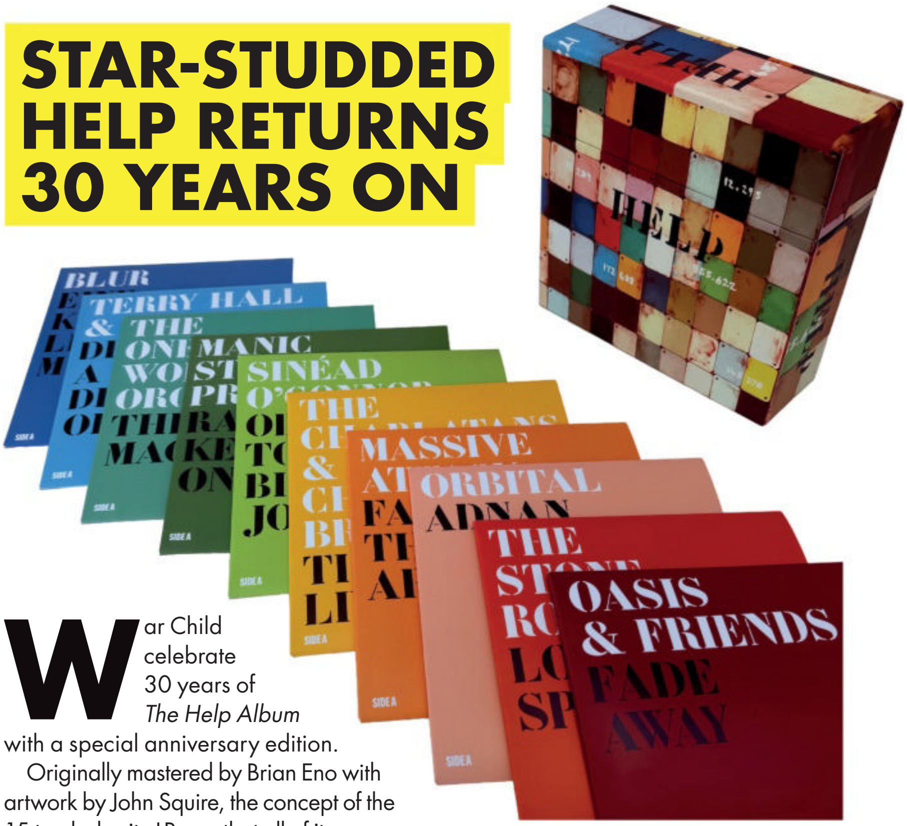
The big hit, *Swords Of A Thousand Men*, dippy lyrics and shoulder-high chorus, gallops along at the pace of the hooves heard at the beginning. Follow-up single *Wünderbar* takes more care to build up to another bonkers hook, and the unabated laddishness continues on gems like *Header Now, Go Wilder, 3 Bells In A Row* and *I Wish*, the first of several where the band manage some pleasant harmonies.

The key to this album is appreciating it in its entirety. The tracks are as snappy, frivolous and brief as good punks would expect, but staying the course over all 13 songs requires perseverance. Highlights towards the end include *Judy Annual, What Else Can I Do* and *Confessions*.

The record peaked on the UK Albums Chart in 1981 at No.44.

MATTHEW RUDD

STAR-STUDDED HELP RETURNS 30 YEARS ON



War Child celebrate 30 years of *The Help Album* with a special anniversary edition.

Originally mastered by Brian Eno with artwork by John Squire, the concept of the 15-track charity LP was that all of its songs had to be recorded within a single day.

The album featured a roll call of some of the biggest British names in 90s music, including Radiohead, The Stone Roses, Blur, Suede, Manic Street Preachers, Massive Attack and Portishead. It was also notable for a number of collaborations. Johnny Depp joined Oasis for a version of *Cigarettes & Alcohol* B-side *Fade Away*, while The Smokin' Mojo Filters supergroup boasted Paul McCartney, Paul Weller and Noel Gallagher in its ranks for a cover of The Beatles' *Come Together*.

Elsewhere, highlights included Terry Hall and Salad duetting on *Dream A Little Dream Of Me* and Sinéad O'Connor's heartwrenching cover of Bobbie Gentry's *Ode To Billie Joe*. The KLF's Bill Drummond and Jimmy Cauty also reconvened as The One World Orchestra for *The Magnificent*.

On its 1995 release, the LP raised more than £1.25 million, enabling War Child to provide support to children caught in the Bosnian conflict. The charity continues to provide aid in 14 countries, including Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine.

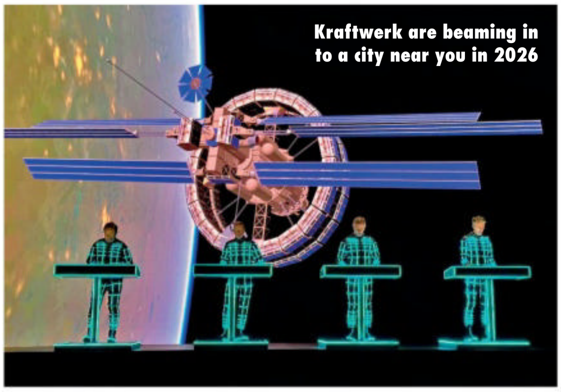
Released on 17 October, this limited-edition collection comes numbered in a box of 10×7" discs and will include three postcards of unseen images taken at Abbey Road in 1995 by photographer Lawrence Watson. An additional postcard from the session will be included for orders made via warchild.org.uk.

KRAFTWERK ANNOUNCE 15-DATE TOUR

Kraftwerk have announced a 15-date UK and Ireland tour for 2026 that includes shows at London's Royal Albert Hall.

The shows are a continuation of the group's Multimedia Tour of North America which began in March.

Kicking off next Spring at Dublin's Bord Gáis Energy Theatre on 17 May, the quartet will then perform dates in Belfast, Wolverhampton, Manchester, Glasgow and Stockton. Additional shows include Sheffield's City Hall, Brighton Centre, Bristol Beacon and the International Centre in Bournemouth.


Kraftwerk are beaming in to a city near you in 2026

The electronic legends then play the Royal Albert Hall on 4-5 June before the tour wraps up with dates at Liverpool's Empire Theatre, Nottingham's Royal Concert Hall and the Edinburgh Playhouse.

Tickets go on sale from 10 October at gigsandtours.com, ticketmaster.co.uk and the group's official website.

Kraftwerk's current line-up features founder member Ralf Hütter alongside Henning Schmitz, Falk Grieffenhagen and Georg Bongartz.

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Ian Peel's A to Z of POP

S IS FOR... SELF-TITLED SONGS

LIVING IN A BOX, TALK TALK, PET SHOP BOYS AND BOW WOW WOW ALL HAVE SOMETHING CURIOUS IN COMMON: A SELECT GROUP OF ARTISTS THAT HAVE RECORDED SONGS NAMED AFTER THEMSELVES

Self-titled songs are absolutely massive in metal. Even a hardened *Classic Pop* reader could probably instantly call to mind *Motörhead* by Motörhead or eponymous tracks by Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden.

In pop, they almost always come at the start of a group's career. A setting out of the stall, a musical manifesto and a statement of what's to come. The debut A-side for Living In A Box, and the debut B-sides for both Pet Shop Boys and Madness were self-titled. For Talk Talk it was their second single, and for Visage it was their fourth.

Tucked away on *Your Cassette Pet,* the cassette-only debut mini-album by Bow Wow Wow from 1980 was their own particular self-titled instrumental track. Albeit as an easter egg: it was unlisted on the artwork. When I bought the debut album by The Monochrome Set in 1980, the very first track on Side One was titled *The Monochrome Set (I Presume).*

For Visage, naturally, their self-titled manifesto was as much about their image as their music. The centrepiece of their (also eponymous) debut album, the single was released in three different sleeves, each featuring pictures of Steve Strange by photographers John Timbers, Robyn Beeche, and Brian Griffin, and had a Blitz club-based video directed by Midge Ure.

Pet Shop Boys had a self-titled track right from the very start of their career, as one of the B-sides to the pre-fame Bobby O releases of *West End Girls.* Some years later, they recorded a cover version, initially for Robbie Williams' *Rudebox,* of a 2004 homage by My Robot Friend called *We're The Pet Shop Boys.*

Adam And The Ants went one better with three self-obsessed tracks. They had *Antmusic,* of course, followed by the somewhat less well-received *Ant Rap* and with the flexidisc-only *A.N.T.S.* bringing up the rear.

Meanwhile, The Clash scored a similar hat-trick with *Clash City Rockers, This Is Radio Clash,* and *We Are The Clash,* lifted from their disappointing 1985 swansong *Cut The Crap* – released, ironically, as the band limped to an inglorious end.

> IN POP, SELF-TITLED SONGS ALMOST ALWAYS COME AT THE START OF A GROUP'S CAREER. A SETTING OUT OF THE STALL, A MUSICAL MANIFESTO AND A STATEMENT OF WHAT'S TO COME.

One of the earliest self-titled tracks that I can think of, from the classic pop canon, was from Madness. It was the B-side to their 2 Tone 7" debut *The Prince.* But it wasn't until examining the sleeve, as a young record buyer, that I realised the group were covering – with good reason as it gave them a theme song – a track by the artist that inspired the A-side, Prince Buster.

Later on, in the *Rise And Fall* era, they sang about madness, with a small m, again. This time it was an original and not a cover when Chris Foreman penned the other side of *Tomorrow's (Just Another Day)*'s double-A, coming up with *Madness (Is All In The Mind).*

If there were to be a compilation of self-titled tracks (*Now That's What I Call... The Band?*), I would also include eponymous songs by They Might Be Giants, The Boomtown Rats and Tin Machine. Stretching the idea slightly, we could also add *Public Image* by PiL, Big Country's *In A Big Country,* Stray Cats' *Stray Cat Strut,* Deee-Lite's *Deee-Lite Theme,* Wham's *Wham Rap! (Enjoy What You Do)* and Level 42's, er, *43.*

A compilation like that would be a mixed bag, musically, for sure. But every single track had the energy and passion of pop artists at their most wilful and wildly optimistic, while also being at their most intriguing and introspective. ■

THE VERY BEST OF

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1978 - 2026

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WED 11 MARCH
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FRI 13 MARCH
BRISTOL BEACON

SAT 14 MARCH
BRIGHTON CENTRE

WED 18 MARCH
LONDON ROUNDHOUSE

SAT 21 MARCH
LIVERPOOL EMPIRE

WED 25 MARCH
CAMBRIDGE CORN EXCHANGE

FRI 27 MARCH
BOURNEMOUTH O2 ACADEMY

SAT 28 MARCH
BIRMINGHAM O2 ACADEMY

WED 01 APRIL
NOTTINGHAM ROCK CITY

FRI 03 APRIL
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SAT 04 APRIL
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This month in

POP

NOVEMBER 1983

BILLY JOEL GETS TOP RANKING FOR *UPTOWN GIRL*, JAGGER IRKS THE CENSORS AND JACKO THRILLS WITH A WORLD-BEATING PROMO

STEVE O'BRIEN

For YOUR Pleasure!
BILLY JOEL
UPTOWN GIRL
A3775

05 Billy Joel tops the UK Singles Chart with *Uptown Girl*, a song written about his relationship with then-girlfriend, supermodel Elle Macpherson. His future wife Christie Brinkley starred in its music video.

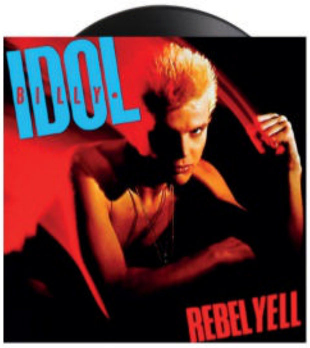
07 Prog rockers Yes, who Trevor Horn had joined in 1980, release their Horn-produced LP *90125*, featuring the hit single *Owner Of A Lonely Heart*. It was the band's 11th studio album and peaked at No.5 in the US.

10 Former Generation X frontman Billy Idol releases *Rebel Yell*, his second solo album – it was the record that would catapult him to global fame.

14 Eurythmics release *Touch*. Featuring the hits *Who's That Girl?*, *Right By Your Side* and *Here Comes The Rain Again*, it will be their first UK No.1 album.

18 **R.E.M. make their first appearance outside the US when they perform on Channel 4's *The Tube*. The following night they make their live UK debut when they take the stage at Dingwalls in London.**

21 Duran Duran release their third long-player, *Seven And The Ragged Tiger*. It enters the UK Albums Chart at No.1, becoming the band's first to top the chart.

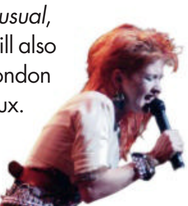


EURYTHMICS
touch

DURAN DURAN
SEVEN AND THE RAGGED TIGER

21 U2 unveil their live mini-album *Under A Blood Red Sky*. Just eight tracks feature on the LP, which was produced by Jimmy Iovine, but its impact would be significant for the Irish band – it made No.28 in the US and No.2 in the UK.

22 Cyndi Lauper starts her Fun Tour with a show in New York. Promoting debut album *She's So Unusual*, the singer will also visit Paris, London and Montreux.

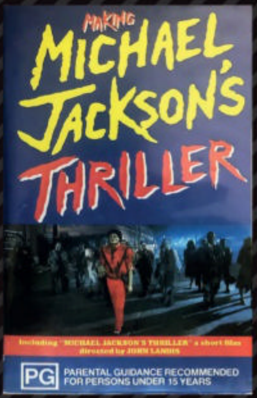


25 Siouxsie And The Banshees release the live double album *Nocturne*, recorded at London's Royal Albert Hall on 30 September and 1 October 1983.

© Alamy

21

Following a private premiere on 14 November attended by Eddie Murphy, Diana Ross and Prince, Michael Jackson's epic 14-minute promo for *Thriller* was revealed to the public for the first time in Los Angeles on 21 November 1983, ahead of its MTV debut on 2 December. The first ‘event’ video, it was directed by Hollywood giant John Landis (*An American Werewolf In London, The Blues Brothers, Trading Places*) and included an iconic narration by horror legend Vincent Price (“Darkness falls across the land/ The midnight hour is close at hand/ Creatures crawl in search of blood/ To terrorise y'all's neighbourhood”).


Making
MICHAEL JACKSON'S
THRILLER
Including “MICHAEL JACKSON'S THRILLER” a short film directed by JOHN LANDIS
PG PARENTAL GUIDANCE RECOMMENDED FOR PERSONS UNDER 15 YEARS

Filmed at various locations around LA, the promo featured Jackson on a date (with former *Playboy* centrefold Ola Ray), before he reveals himself as a zombie and leads a graveyard dance with his fellow undead.

“I hoped that Michael would go along with my plan to make a proper two-reeler and not just a ‘needle-drop’ rock video,” the filmmaker recalled with *The Guardian* in 2017. “He loved the idea of making *Thriller* a real motion picture event that could play in cinemas all over the world. So we created a budget that reflected our ambitious production, much bigger than anything spent on a music video before.”

The promo would prove such a game-changer that it even came with its own 45-minute behind-the-scenes documentary, *Making Michael Jackson's Thriller*, and in 2009, it was inducted into the US National Film Registry by the Library of Congress as “culturally, historically or aesthetically significant”.

Jackson would reteam with Landis in 1991 for a similarly ambitious short film for *Black Or White*, the lead single from his *Dangerous* LP. But despite an equally star-studded cast (Macaulay Culkin, Tess Harper and George Wendt), it failed to have the impact of *Thriller*, a video that even today wows with its pre-CGI special effects and inspired choreography.

TOP 5 UK ALBUMS CHART

12 NOVEMBER 1983

① **LIONEL RICHIE**
CAN'T SLOW DOWN

Lionel Richie
CAN'T SLOW DOWN

② **CULTURE CLUB**
COLOUR BY NUMBERS

CULTURE CLUB
COLOUR BY NUMBERS

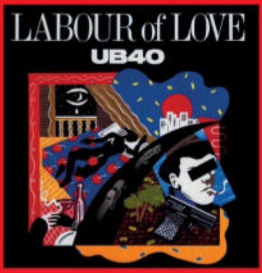
③ **VARIOUS ARTISTS**
THE TWO OF US

The two of us
Great Love Songs

④ **PAUL McCARTNEY**
PIPES OF PEACE

PIPES OF PEACE
PAUL McCARTNEY

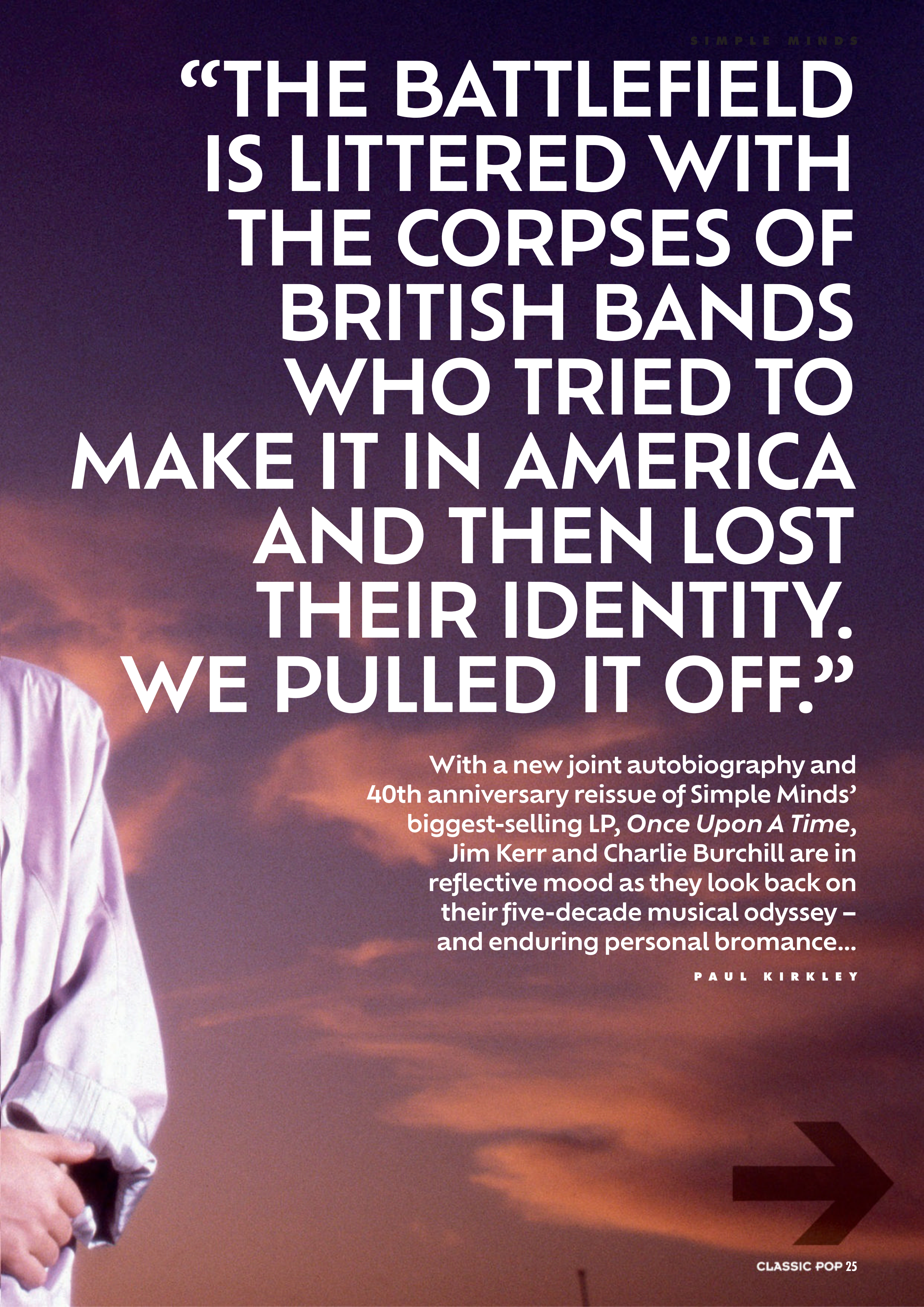
⑤ **UB40**
LABOUR OF LOVE


LABOUR of LOVE
UB40

© Dean Chalkley

Friends since their childhood days in Glasgow, Charlie Burchill and Jim Kerr have been the one constant in Simple Minds' 48-year history

© Guido Harari



"THE BATTLEFIELD IS LITTERED WITH THE CORPSES OF BRITISH BANDS WHO TRIED TO MAKE IT IN AMERICA AND THEN LOST THEIR IDENTITY. WE PULLED IT OFF."

With a new joint autobiography and 40th anniversary reissue of Simple Minds' biggest-selling LP, *Once Upon A Time*, Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill are in reflective mood as they look back on their five-decade musical odyssey – and enduring personal bromance...

PAUL KIRKLEY

Simple Minds' 1981 line-up featured Jim Kerr, Charlie Burchill, Derek Forbes, Mick MacNeil and Brian McGee

A few years ago, Charlie Burchill and Jim Kerr were interviewed for a BBC documentary about music's messiest break-ups. Which may seem like an odd booking, given the pair's famously adamantine bond. But amidst torrid war stories from the likes of Fleetwood Mac, The Smiths and Oasis, the twin heartbeats of Simple Minds were there to represent the platonic ideal of a creative partnership – one that has now spanned almost half a century. "We were the token band that *hadn't* split up," smiles Burchill. "Which we appreciate is unusual. I put it down to the fact that Jim and I are complete opposites – we are different in so many ways, and yet on the fundamental things, we're on the same wavelength."

"It *is* a bit weird," agrees Kerr. "Most people in bands hate each other so much after 10 years they don't even want to travel together – let alone live in the same street."

The story of that friendship has now been mapped in a new joint memoir, *Our Secrets Are The Same*. Written with Minds' biographer Graeme Thomson, it's the rollercoaster tale of how two working-class kids who grew up on the same Glasgow council estate, and are now neighbours in the Sicilian town of Taormina, "navigated the sudden pressure drops, changing currents and headwinds" of life in the maelstrom of the rock'n'roll circus.

Might we, suggests *Classic Pop*, even go so far as to call it a love story? "There's definitely an element of that," nods Kerr, talking to us via Zoom, a little over 24 hours after Simple Minds wrapped up their latest globe-straddling tour at Taormina's ancient amphitheatre. "But, coming from the Glasgow tenements, we're a bit awkward about it.

"We certainly don't say it to each other. And Charlie knows that I'm not a hugger – I'm like, 'fuck off, don't touch me!'"

"Jim always says it's a bit like a marriage – but so far I haven't tried to take his house away from him," laughs Burchill, dialling in from his own home down the street. "But it's funny, we never really stopped to think about our lives, and our friendship until recently. We actually learned a lot about each other from the book. It really gets under the hood of our relationship."

SKY-HIGH DREAMS

If there's a single word that defines the Simple Minds story, it's probably hope. Despite being born into the "Dickensian slums" of a shattered post-industrial Glasgow, these sons of labourers and factory girls were both excited about a future that seemed full of optimism.

Simple Minds, pictured in 1981 with Kenny Hyslop, who played on the band's first UK Top 20 hit, *Promised You A Miracle*

Moving to the new high-rise Toryglen estate – where, within minutes of arriving, he encountered Burchill, sitting on a pile of builder's sand – the eight-year-old Kerr felt on top of the world. Literally. "On the 11th floor, not only do I feel I can see the whole world, but I have a sense that it is full of possibilities," he writes in *Our Secrets Are The Same*. And it is this sense of *potential* that would go on to define Simple Minds' music.

"Glasgow was kind of on its knees," recalls Kerr. "The shipyards were going, the factories were going, and when we listened to our parents' conversations, they were saying 'you've got to go to Canada, you've got to go to Australia – this city's finished'. But at the same time, this was the modern world – man was landing on the moon, and we were moving into these high-rise blocks with elevators and baths and all mod cons. So there was this sense of, 'hey, this is our time'.

"And then the real hand of fate that came along was this thing called punk. Before punk, there'd always been this sense that, to be an artist, you had to go and live in Paris or Vienna or something. Or at least up sticks and go to London. And if you want to know where our self-belief – or maybe our arrogance – came from, it was probably from our very first gig.

"Normally, when you put a band together, you spend a year playing to three men and a dog. But we played [as punk provocateurs Johnny & The Self Abusers] and everyone went fucking bananas.

Jim Kerr & Charlie Burchill
With Graeme Thomson
our secrets are the same
The enduring friendship at the heart of
SIMPLE MINDS

WORDS AND PICTURES

"I don't see myself as a wordsmith so much as someone who sprays slogans on top of a musical picture," says Jim Kerr in *Our Secrets Are The Same*, of his approach to writing lyrics. "I'm not looking for intellectual brownie points – I want listeners to be swept along by the *essence* of it."

"It was usually about trying to translate what I felt was coming out of the music – which sometimes I could almost see as pictures," Kerr tells *Classic Pop*. "And I think it really worked. Of course, if you throw in a few drugs as well and you don't sleep for days and weeks, you're working with a different logic... But it was all coming out of our version of beat poetry."

"It's still unusual for Jim to come up with a fully-formed lyric before there's any music," explains Charlie Burchill in the book. "On reflection, I think that's what's shaped Simple Minds as a band. Jim and I are not really songwriters. It sounds strange to say that, but for us the singer-songwriter method is too mundane. We are looking to capture the emotion. If that's not there, then nothing's there."

> "WHEN YOU COME FROM THE SORT OF BACKGROUND WE CAME FROM, THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY, AND THAT'S UP. WE ALWAYS FELT THERE WAS STUFF OUT THERE..."
>
> CHARLIE BURCHILL

Because Glasgow was ready. It was like: 'if you build it, they will come'."

Though it was punk that had lit their fuse, Simple Minds' natural optimism – and a musical epiphany in the form of Donna Summer's disco classic *I Feel Love* – saw them reject the movement's violent, nihilistic despair in favour of pulsating, thrillingly futurist art-rock that rang with talk of brilliant days, promised miracles and new gold dreams; it was a world in which, to quote the tellingly named *Glittering Prize*, 'everything is possible'. "It's a bit of a cliché," notes Burchill. "But when you come from the sort of background we came from, there's only one way, and that's up. We always just felt there was stuff out there that we had to get in touch with."

Simple Minds play Belfast's Ulster Hall in February 1984

AVANT-GARDE SPIRIT

Having left school at 16 with no qualifications, Kerr had gone from a butcher's boy to an apprentice plumber ("my working life had progressed directly from blood to shit" he writes in the book), while Burchill worked on building sites, before also training as a plumber.

But, for some reason, these working-class kids also had "the lofty notion" of going along to the Citizens Theatre in the Gorbals, where they discovered a shared passion for the experimental and the avant-garde that would feed into the spirit of Simple Minds.

The pair's growing love of literature, arthouse cinema and travel – as teenagers, they hitchhiked around Europe, sleeping under the arches of the Roman amphitheatre in Verona that, a decade later, they would sell out – also helped widen their critical horizons, along with a musical palette that challenged punk's prescriptive 'Year Zero' approach by embracing everything from the Sex Pistols and Bowie to Krautrock and even Genesis.

While Charlie's mum saved up her Embassy cigarette coupons to buy him his first guitar, Jim is candid about his lack of musical chops and vocal prowess. "If you want a great singer, go to the opera," he smiles. "I'm a great *Simple Minds* singer. But if you're thinking of asking me to sing *Ave Maria* at your wedding, I'd scratch that one. Although Bono will probably do that for you," he adds, in a playful dig at his old friend and sometime rival for Celtic rock supremacy.

Burchill, though, is having none of it. "Jim's a fantastic singer," he says. "You can have people who are incredible musicians, but it doesn't mean anything unless they're expressing their identity through it."

"If you want a great singer, go to the opera..." Jim Kerr's self-deprecatory view of his own vocals

What Kerr undeniably *was*, from an early age, was a visionary: someone who could "see the whole movie in my head". He is the engine that has guided Simple Minds, manifesting their destiny often through sheer, bloody-minded force of will. Which is why, at 66, he's concluded that life is not so much about finding yourself, as "creating yourself along the way". (As a kid with a very pronounced stammer – "I was a bit of a wallflower, who didn't speak until I was spoken to" – Simple Minds was also the place he found his voice in a very literal sense.)

"It's the frontman's job to come up with all the myths and the bullshit," reflects Kerr. "It's one thing to imagine things, and another to bring them into reality."

TWICE UPON A TIME

So is *Don't You (Forget About Me)* now canonically part of *Once Upon A Time*?

Yes and no. On the ruby red (see what they've done there?), single disc 40th anniversary vinyl edition, the track has indeed made the cut, forming a one-two punch after *Alive & Kicking* – a US No.3 hit in its own right, lest we forget – to close out Side One.

But on the 5CD super deluxe boxset, the *Breakfast Club* classic appears, in standard and extended mix variants, on one of the two 'B-sides and rarities' discs (even though it's clearly neither).

With 1987's classic *Live In The City Of Light* album filling out the final two discs, the CD set is effectively a repackaged version of the out-of-print 2015 deluxe edition, minus the DVD, but with new artwork and a 36-page booklet with rare photos, interviews and track-by-track commentary.

"It's still a great sounding record," Charlie Burchill says. "To me, it holds up really well. Those eight tracks are very focused, intentionally. There were other tracks we could have put on there – including *Don't You...*, of course – but I still feel like it's a really complete album, with its own sound."

SIMPLE MINDS
SIMPLE MINDS LIVE
IN THE CITY OF LIGHT
the ALBUM we WANTED
SIMPLE MINDS

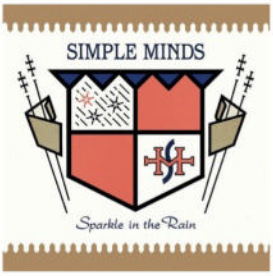
"Jim's a big brother, and I'm a little brother, and that dynamic carries over into the band," offers Burchill. "He calls the shots, but he's also very protective, and very encouraging."

MUSCULAR SOUND

At times, says Burchill, this relentless drive was "perhaps too much for some band members", and Kerr himself admits "our methods may have seemed a tad Mafiosi" when it came to dispatching former colleagues who were perceived not to be pulling their weight.

"There were a couple of times when it looked like the ship might sink, and we had to do what was necessary," is Burchill's assessment.

All the 'myths and bullshit' eventually paid off, and by early 1985 Simple Minds were sitting pretty. Showcasing a new muscular sound, their *Sparkle In The Rain* album had consolidated the success of its breakthrough predecessor *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)*, gifting them their first UK No.1. So the birth in late March of Kerr and wife Chrissie Hynde's first child, Yasmin, felt like a good time to take a breather. But within weeks, the singer's paternity leave plans were blown out of the water when a song the band had grudgingly knocked out in an afternoon for John Hughes' latest teen movie *The Breakfast Club* began its climb all the way to the top of the US Billboard chart – ushering in the most frenzied, head-spinning period of Simple Minds' career.



Eager to capitalise on the momentum, they hired US superproducers Jimmy Iovine and Bob Clearmountain to "kick the tyres" and help them meet the moment. "We'd got the bit between our teeth," says Kerr. "We just thought, 'fuck everyone, we're going to do this – we're going to go to America and work with the best'."

What they steadfastly refused to do, though, was include what had quickly become their signature song on the album. "It was a moment of madness," admits Burchill in the book, of the Keith Forsey-penned *Don't You (Forget About Me)*'s exclusion from *Once Upon A Time*. "It was arrogance. Our stubborn self-belief had taken us a long way. But on this occasion, it backfired."

"It wasn't so much *arrogance*," argues Kerr. "It's more that we felt we'd written a book, and we weren't going to take a chapter from someone else's book and put it in there. We were like, 'we've got this much better thing than that – we've got this thing called *Alive & Kicking*'. Now, hindsight's a great thing, and yes, it would probably have added another gazillion sales. But, let's be honest," he grins, with the quiet satisfaction of a man who has shifted north of 60 million records, "we haven't done that bad."

"We sort of made fun of it for a long time," says Burchill. "And then eventually we said, 'you know what? We really did make a mistake'

Mel Gaynor, far left, joined Simple Minds permanently after appearing as a session drummer on *New Gold Dream (81-82-83-84)*

Don't You (Forget About Me) became a breakout hit for Simple Minds in the US after it was featured in John Hughes' movie ***The Breakfast Club*** and topped the Hot 100

© Guido Harari

> “THE REASON WE’RE STILL HERE TODAY, AND THE REASON WE’RE BACK IN ARENAS, IS BECAUSE OF THE MUSIC WE MADE AROUND *ONCE UPON A TIME* – THE BIG GESTURE MUSIC” **JIM KERR**

[leaving off the track]. But you have to be young and daft at times.”

It would take, in Kerr’s words, “four decades for common sense to prevail”. But now, thanks to this month’s 40th anniversary reissue of *Once Upon A Time* (see boxout), Simple Minds’ biggest song – which last year joined the rarefied club of tracks with a billion Spotify streams – has finally been united with their biggest album.

THINKING BIG

Even without that monumental song, *Once Upon A Time* offered a more widescreen version of Simple Minds – an album of breast-beating anthems like *Alive & Kicking*, *Sanctify Yourself* and the sublime title track; material that demanded the sort of big gestures that could comfortably fill stadia (including the JFK Stadium in Philadelphia, where they performed at Live Aid).

“Looking back, I can see that sometimes we were trying too hard,” admits Kerr. “If you’re trying to reach the back of the crowd, but the TV cameras are up close, sometimes you can seem a bit over the top. So the words that would come in the slipstream of that, like ‘pompous’… I can see that now. But let’s also be honest, the reason we’re still here today, and the reason we’re back in arenas, is because of the music we made around that time – the big gesture music. There might be around 20 per cent who want to hear us play *Theme For Great Cities*, and they’ll hear it. But if you’re bringing the wife and kids, they’re not going to be asking for our attempts at being Kraftwerk.”

“All bands used to worry they’d be accused of ‘selling out’,” suggests Burchill. “That’s how music journalism used to work back then: ‘Oh, they’ve gone Stateside and turned stadium rock’. But I never bought any of that. To me, we were just evolving at our own rate. As we became a better live band, playing bigger shows, it was just a natural evolution. You can’t be a shrinking violet in front of 15,000 people.”

And it worked. “The battlefield is littered with the corpses of British bands who tried to make it in America and lost their identity,” notes Kerr. “But we pulled it off.”

It came, though, at the expense of his relationship with Hynde, who was left at home holding the baby, while her husband conquered the world. (“I have always felt guilty about the timing,” admits Kerr in the book, of missing out on those precious early months and years with his first child.)

The singer met both his ex-wives at elevators – one when he was going in, and the other when he was coming out. (“There’s an Aerosmith song about that, isn’t there?” he laughs.) As someone who doesn’t strike *CP* as a kiss-and-tell kind of guy, how comfortable was he writing about his showbiz marriages to Hynde and, later, Patsy Kensit?

“I think you have to,” he reasons. “If you’re going to say ‘this is the story’, it would be odd to just skip over those. But I think we’ve been pretty conservative about it.”

When Kensit – with whom he has a son, James – went on to marry Liam Gallagher at the height of Oasis’ 90s hellraising days, Kerr admits to some early

Jim Kerr married Chrissie Hynde, lead singer of The Pretenders, in 1984 and together they had a daughter, Yasmin, in 1985

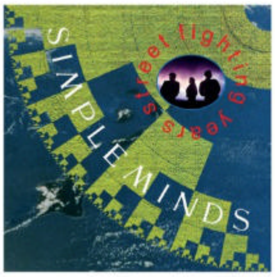
Jim Kerr, photographed in the early 90s, around the time that he could see “the new tribes coming over the hill”

© Alamy

Jim Kerr, circa 1987, possibly contemplating working with Trevor Horn and Stephen Lipson on their *Street Fighting Years* album (left)

nerves, which proved thankfully unfounded. “Liam and I have sons who are half-brothers, and if my son hadn’t liked him, that would have freaked me out. But Liam’s great,” he says.

The pair still occasionally “have a word, back and forth”, and he has fond memories of Liam’s mum, Peggy. “For some reason, whenever I went round to the house, she would be there, and she and I got on really well. She reminded me of my own mum.”



FIGHT TO BE HEARD

Meanwhile, back in the 1980s, Simple Minds did finally get some downtime – but that, too, would come at a cost. With North America in the palm of their hand, the band waited four long years to release a follow-up to *Once Upon A Time,* eventually returning with 1989’s *Street Fighting Years*. An unflinching record of politicised Celtic folk rock tackling issues such as the poll tax, the Northern Irish Troubles and Apartheid – the band became leading voices in the campaign to free Nelson Mandela – it was met with a baffled shrug by record buyers in US flyover states.

“It was anathema to the Americans,” explains Burchill. “They weren’t interested in a six-and-a-half-minute song about Belfast. And we were like, ‘okay, fair enough. But we have to do this record.’”

Kerr admits he’d probably arrived at the notion of addressing “the big themes” partly to avoid looking inward, at his crumbling marriage to Chrissie Hynde. But the pair have remained close – Hynde is also good friends with Yumie, Kerr’s partner of 30 years – and he is still a Pretenders fan (“it’s nice to hear her in the supermarket every Christmas”).

As a new decade dawned, Kerr could see “the new tribes coming over the hill”, as first baggy then grunge then Britpop left Simple Minds adrift and out of time. “With one or two exceptions, if you’ve been a band of one generation – and I like to think Simple Minds were one of those bands – then you’re probably going to get it in the neck from the next generation,” he reasons. “They’re going to tell you to fuck off.”

Decamping to start a new life in Sicily, where he now runs a successful hotel, Kerr considered throwing in the towel altogether. “Charlie always says ‘you did – but only for a weekend’,” he laughs. “But there was a point where we had no management, no publishing, no record company – they wouldn’t even let us in the building. They were like, ‘who are you?’ But we didn’t expect anyone to feel sorry for us. We never felt anyone owed us anything. We’d had a good innings.

“Fortunately, unlike a lot of bands, we’d been looked after – we were flush. So we could have walked away. But the hard thing is to walk away from yourself. How do you stop being you?”

> “WITH ONE OR TWO EXCEPTIONS, IF YOU’VE BEEN A BAND OF ONE GENERATION – AND I LIKE TO THINK SIMPLE MINDS WERE ONE OF THOSE BANDS – THEN YOU’RE PROBABLY GOING TO GET IT IN THE NECK FROM THE NEXT GENERATION”
>
> JIM KERR

COMEBACK KINGS

As it turned out, there was plenty more fuel in the Simple Minds tank, and today the band, with a refreshed line-up featuring bassist Ged Grimes, backing vocalist Sarah Brown, keyboardist Erik Ljunggren, multi-instrumentalist Gordy Goudie and powerhouse drummer Cherisse Osei, are back holding court in the world’s arenas and enormosheds – including in North America, where they’ve just played some of the biggest shows of their career.

“Everybody loves a comeback, don’t they?” says Kerr. “‘They were dead, and they managed to get off the canvas’. It makes for a much more interesting story.”

Plus, even at their lowest point, Simple Minds never entirely lost their cast-iron confidence. “I think we still always believed that we were going to ascend again,” admits Burchill. “And it’s happened.”

© Simon Emmett

The current line-up of Simple Minds sees Kerr and Burchill joined by Sarah Brown, Erik Ljunggren, Gordy Goudie, Ged Grimes and Cherisse Osei

GIVING THE GUY HIS CREDIT

That Simple Minds' biggest hit is the only one they didn't write is the stuff of rock legend. But is it really true? In 2025, it's not unusual for tracks to list up to a dozen songwriters, with "change a word, earn a third" becoming an industry mantra. So it's perhaps surprising that, despite Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill's significant contributions to the song, the band turned down a joint credit – and a share of the considerable royalties – for *Don't You (Forget About Me)*.

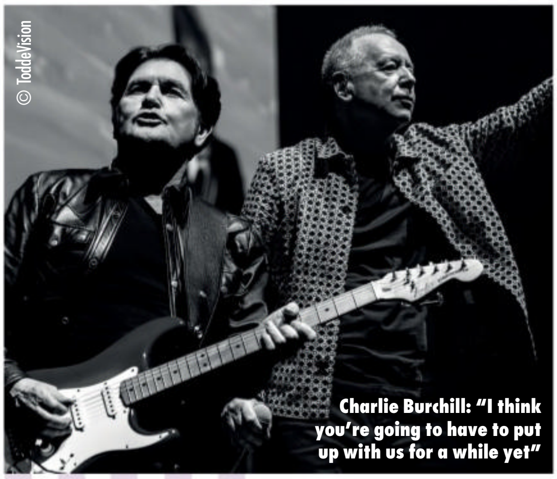
"Keith Forsey offered to split some of the publishing with us," says Kerr. "And it might have been a bit naughty of me, but I don't think I even went to the band with that. I just said, 'no, we're not going to take the guy's money'."

"We joke about it," says Charlie. "Jim always says, 'I wrote the best bits – the la las and the hey heys' – and I say, 'yeah but what about the intro? I just hit two chords and everyone goes crazy'. But no. It's Keith's song, and Keith's a great guy. There's no way we were going to do that to him."

"That said," adds Jim, "our only UK No.1 single, *Belfast Child,* used a melody [from the Irish folk song *She Moved Through The Fair*] that was in the public domain. So we'd clearly got wise pretty soon!"

And the future? As the band close in on their 50th anniversary in 2027, Kerr's mind has begun to turn to possible endgames. "It's not like we're going to say, 'here's a gun with two bullets in it'," he laughs. "But I don't think we should just dwindle away. I think we should give everyone the chance for a final hurrah, whenever that is."

Burchill, though, can't see it happening any time soon. "Jim has a nice line about every great story needing a great ending," he says. "And I get that. You don't want to fizzle out. But in some ways, things are evolving in our favour right now. To me, we still feel like a work in progress, and we recently had a conversation that turned the whole thing inside out. It definitely didn't sound like a band that's ready to call it a day. I think you're going to have to put up with us for a while yet."


© ToddeVision

Charlie Burchill: "I think you're going to have to put up with us for a while yet"

As for the youthful optimism that sustained their early years, do Simple Minds still believe – in a world that often feels like it's on fire – that 'everything is possible'? "It's probably time for a new generation to pick up the baton for changing the world," suggests Burchill, who's 65. "At our stage, the job is just to get the music right. Because that's the thing we *can* do to make people happy."

Kerr, for his part, casts his mind back 40 years to 1985, when love was a white dove, and hope – long live hope – could spin the whole world round... "There are a lot of things we've done where you look back now and say, 'that jacket no longer fits'," he reflects. "But the lyrics on *Once Upon A Time,* I think they have found their time again. I'm not going to say anything as daft as 'the world needs words like that'," he smiles. "But right now, *I* need words like that." ■

● *Our Secrets Are The Same* is published by Constable and reviewed on page 97. The *Once Upon A Time* 40th anniversary edition will be released on 17 October via UMC and is reviewed on page 89.

EURYTHMICS

CLASSIC ALBUM

BE YOURSELF TONIGHT

EURYTHMICS

THE DUO'S FOURTH STUDIO ALBUM SEES THEM ON FINE FORM, SUPPLEMENTING THE TRADEMARK SYNTHS AND DRUM MACHINES WITH A RAW, TOOLED-UP UPDATE OF THE MOTOWN SOUND

FELIX ROWE

The onset of 1985 found Eurythmics in a commercial sweet spot as they rode a wave of successive hits on the global stage. It was barely two-and-a-bit years since *Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)* in January 1983 had put Annie Lennox and Dave Stewart on the map. In this brief timespan, the duo had morphed from synth-pop antiheroes – very much encompassing the outsider mentality – to now fully embracing their newly-achieved diva and rock star personalities. Of course, that underdog dynamic becomes increasingly untenable the more successful an act gets; something they were no doubt aware of themselves. It was adapt or die, and so their upward career trajectory was propelled forward by a necessary progression in sound and style.

DYNAMIC DUO

The first half of the 80s was a prolific period for the duo – five studio albums in as many years (including 1984's soundtrack effort *1984*), plus various live and remix records, rush-released to capitalise on the boom. In the fleeting world of pop, it was very much a case of striking while the iron's hot. And throughout this period, Eurythmics were one of the hottest prospects coming out of Britain.

To some extent, *Be Yourself Tonight* picks up where 1983's *Touch* left off, though moving further away from their synth-pop origins and adopting a more organic band aesthetic. The steely synths that characterised their initial success are still present, but tempered with the introduction of live drums, funky horns and Dave Stewart's dynamic electric guitar.

The rhythm section comprising bassist Dean Garcia (returning from *Touch*) and drummer Olle Romo (a new addition, largely supplanting the drum machines of old) provide the backbone that underpins the record. A formidable presence and key to the album's sound, they are tight enough to play it loose, injecting a spirited human rawness into the music. The result is a warmer, fuller and more muscular sound.

Eurythmics first LP, *In The Garden*, recorded with Conny Plank in Cologne, clearly took its roots from German art rock. They then found success in creating a very English synth-pop sound. *Be Yourself Tonight* sees the two Brits taking on the US heartland. The record is clearly indebted to the late 60s sounds of Motown and Stax, echoing that soulful approach in the vocal arrangements, use of horns and syncopated rhythms. But, far from mere throwback pastiche, Stewart's modern production style helped to create something that felt very fresh and on the pulse.

BE MY GUEST TONIGHT

A sign of the Eurythmics' rising currency among the pop glitterati, *Be Yourself Tonight* is a star-studded affair, with an impressive roll call of A-listers lining up for a piece of the action. Aretha Franklin, Stevie Wonder, Elvis Costello and various members of the Heartbreakers (sans Tom Petty) all make appearances. Blondie's Clem Burke even crops up behind the drumkit in one of the promos, though – on this occasion – he doesn't actually play on the recording itself.

The coup demonstrates Eurythmics' great pulling power at this point – in itself a humblebrag of sorts: "Look who we can get on our record!" Aligning themselves with the established American big hitters lends further credibility to the sound they helped to inspire.

Meanwhile, they are joined by top-flight bassist Nathan East (who would later play on Michael Jackson's *I Just Can't Stop Loving You*, and Daft Punk's ubiquitous *Get Lucky*), as well as Michael Kamen, who provided the string arrangements.

By now, Stewart was blossoming into his new role as go-to producer for the stars, with The Undertones' Feargal Sharkey's solo debut album and Tom Petty's *Southern Accents* both delivered in the same year.

On his own record, he demonstrates a growing confidence, allowing that previously-suppressed part of his personality to come to the fore. The devil on his shoulder is whispering: "Put that synthesizer away, Dave, it's OK to be playing guitar again…" And he duly obliges.

And so, he positively embraces the rock star histrionics that the pair had turned away from upon initial success. The cold, insular persona, previously cultivated, is opened out into an explicitly rock approach – tooled up, confident and comfortable in flexing its muscles, playing up to the pomp excesses of the era in sound and image. This is boys and girls celebrating their individual status: as Stewart indulges in the exaggerated rock god persona,

“

Crowning glory:
Be Yourself Tonight
spawned a total of
four UK Top 20 singles,
including the duo's
first (and only) No.1,
There Must Be An Angel
(Playing With My Heart)

Motown legend Stevie Wonder was one of the celebrated guest artists on *Be Yourself Tonight*, adding harmonica to *There Must Be An Angel*...

Lennox consciously adopts a more outwardly feminine look – a contrast to the intentionally ambiguous androgynous image on which she made her name.

Simultaneously, the singer continued to develop and evolve as a lyricist. While she always had a powerful and mesmerising presence, her words seem to come from a position of renewed strength. She's still exploring that fertile ground around the powerplays in relationships, and dealing with being scorned, but with less fragility. Take, say, *Here Comes The Rain Again*, the opener from their previous LP – undoubtedly among their very best work, though lyrically dealing with a sense of foreboding darkness and insecurity, fear of an uncertain future; and compare that with *Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves*, a self-confident anthem that boldly asserts a positive message for the here and now.

Another quirk of Annie's lyrical themes: it doesn't escape notice that this album has very long titles (with equally long subtitles in brackets). This all plays into the sense of bombast. Lennox seems to be coming from the Bernie Taupin School of Song Titles and Composition. Taupin once said something to the effect of: "Give a song a great title and you're already off to a good start" – in other words, make it epic and something that sounds thrilling when called out by a radio DJ, or reads like a classic staple on a jukebox.

Despite the American influence, principal tracking for the album was actually recorded in Paris, with additional work completed in LA. As the pair evolved as artists, they developed a knack for working quickly – laying down complex arrangements while moving fast

THE SONGS ▶▶

① WOULD I LIE TO YOU?

Eurythmics are back with a bang. Specifically, a trashy "Bam! Bam! Bam! Bam!" of the snare drum, beating out a chugging Detroit rhythm, complete with soulful horn stabs and crunchy power chords from Stewart, while *Get Lucky*'s Nathan East takes that funky bassline for a walk. It's a real showstopper, the perfect vehicle for Lennox's gospel lead and vocal arrangement skills, as the backing singers weave in and out with a call-and-response vibe. The sound of a motorbike revving enhances the sense of propulsion, before it plays out with a screeching saxophone. This aint' no slow-burn grower. Rather, it hits the listener immediately off the bat, getting straight to the point and remaining instantly accessible. Released as the album's lead single, it only reached No.17 in the group's native UK, but went Top 5 in North America and hit the top spot in Australia.

② THERE MUST BE AN ANGEL (PLAYING WITH MY HEART)

With barely a pause to catch a breath, they're back in with another huge hook: that instantly recognisable wordless vocal refrain, now synonymous with the Eurythmics sound. Boy, does Annie Lennox know her way around an earworm. Musically, they are back in more familiar synth-pop territory, with a predominantly electronic soundscape, contrasting with the opener, but carrying the light bounce and soul of a Supremes classic. And yes, that is, of course, the unmistakable harmonica sound of Stevie Wonder, which momentarily evokes his own 1976 hit, *Isn't She Lovely*. "He was doing a harmonica solo and I had to produce him, which was a bit awesome," Stewart recalled in an 1987 interview with Adam Sweeting for *Q* magazine. "He knew I must have been nervous because at one point he said, 'How's it sounding?' and I said, 'It's sounding really good, but after you've played the melody just play anything you want for the next 16 bars.' He says, OK, and he starts playing these sea shanties... That broke the ice and we all fell about laughing." Another huge single, it went Top 5 across the globe, reaching No.1 in Finland, Ireland, Norway and the UK, where it remains the duo's only chart-topper.

③ LOVE YOU LIKE A BALL AND CHAIN

The most synth-wave sounding track on the record, more akin to the *Sweet Dreams* era, and one of the album's highlights. It skips along nonchalantly on a cool programmed/processed drum groove, with icy synths cascading over it rhythmically, and Stewart's syncopated guitars getting funky with light and energetic licks. Swaggering R&B male backing vocals from The Charles Williams Singers add sass to complement Lennox's lead. Following a sultrier vocal in the first half, she lets rip in the second. As the track seems to be coming to a close, Stewart implements his innovative production techniques, as it drops to a woozy and vaguely psychedelic breakdown section, complete with panning vocals – a trippy surprise that today's head-spinning producer, Tame Impala would be proud of.

> "WHILE ANNIE LENNOX ALWAYS HAD A POWERFUL AND MESMERISING PRESENCE, HER WORDS SEEM TO COME FROM A POSITION OF RENEWED STRENGTH"

THE PLAYERS ▶▶

ANNIE LENNOX
The Scottish powerhouse singer, who cemented her position as a true pop icon in the 80s, before going on to massive solo success in the 90s, with *Diva*.

DAVE STEWART
The 'strong silent type' guitarist and songwriter who would become producer for the stars (working with Tom Petty and Feargal Sharkey in the same year), and later helming albums by the likes of Mick Jagger and Stevie Nicks.

DEAN GARCIA
The principal bassist throughout the album.

OLLE ROMO
The main drummer on the record and a regular collaborator with Stewart. His extensive performing, programming and production credits include Shania Twain, Bryan Adams and Lady Gaga.

ARETHA FRANKLIN
In the middle of a comeback or sorts, freshening up her own sound, the Queen of Soul appears on *Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves*.

STEVIE WONDER
The Motown legend performs his inimitable harmonica on *There Must Be An Angel (Playing With My Heart)*.

ELVIS COSTELLO
The punk poet and former leader of the Attractions performs an instantly recognisable harmony on *Adrian* – a pensive, jangly outlier that doesn't sit easily with the soul-pop elsewhere.

THE HEARTBREAKERS
Three members of Tom Petty's backing band, Benmont Tench (organ), Mike Campbell (lead guitar) and Stan Lynch (drums), perform on *Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves*.

④ SISTERS ARE DOIN' IT FOR THEMSELVES

One of several tracks clearly indebted to the Motown sound. *Sisters...* sees Annie team up with Aretha Franklin for a pioneering feminist anthem. "We're coming out of the kitchen!" they sing with glorious intent. In fact, the duet was originally intended for Tina Turner – an exciting prospect in itself. But Lennox and Stewart needn't have felt short-changed by the substitute – Franklin is in fine form. Just to up the ante even more, there's a chunk of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers performing as the backing band on this one track. The same recording would also appear on Aretha's 'comeback' record, released in the same year, with the very forward-thinking name: *Who's Zoomin' Who* (a question we've all contended with in the 2020s). Released as a joint single, it was a Top 10 hit both in Europe and on the US Dance Club Songs chart. But the track has since taken on a new life as a girl-power anthem and been covered on numerous occasions – by the likes of the Spice Girls, Kylie and Dannii Minogue, an all-star ensemble at the 2011 Grammys featuring Christina Aguilera – as well as, somewhat more bizarrely, in character by Lisa Simpson, Patty and Selma Bouvier with Ann and Nancy Wilson of Heart on The Simpsons' *The Yellow Album*, Xena: Warrior Princess, and Alan Partridge.

⑤ CONDITIONED SOUL

Some gentle respite following the vocal onslaught of *Sisters...*, *Conditioned Soul* comes in with chiming percussion and what could very well be a shakuhachi (an ethnic flute instrument – probably synthesized), most familiar from the opening riff on Peter Gabriel's *Sledgehammer* (though this track actually predates the ex-Genesis man's hit single by a whole year). In fact, the song sounds notably Gabriel-like in general, with its theatrical melody, sparse arrangement and 'world' instrumentation. One of the more plaintive songs on the record, it gets going when a minimal programmed beat comes in. Another more experimental track, there's something of a hotchpotch sound, as the world music instrumentation and a vaguely African feel rub up against Stewart's countrified slide guitar. But somehow, it works.

⑥ ADRIAN

Another duet, Elvis Costello is immediately recognisable on the chorus. But as great as his voice is, its presence jars in this setting. Costello's slow vibrato (wonderful on his own records) doesn't blend well with Annie's, producing an unsatisfying phasing effect when overlaid. Stylistically, too, though not a bad song in and of itself, it seems notably out of kilter with the rest of the album: a Springsteen-esque beat, and a breezy feel of the jangly guitars, echoed by the more subdued, held back vocals, which are floatier than elsewhere. It is a grower and would probably be a highlight of a different record – one can almost imagine it as a *Rumours*-era Christine McVie number. But it doesn't really sit right among the synthed-up pop and new Motown vibe exhibited elsewhere.

⑦ IT'S ALRIGHT (BABY'S COMING BACK)

One of the absolute highlights, *It's Alright...* features supremely cool production from Stewart. Meanwhile, the way Lennox bends those notes soulfully is pure class. Again, it was another single, though, perhaps owing to its subtleties, didn't do quite as well as others from the record, only breaching the Top 10 in Ireland. Nonetheless, it won Eurythmics an Ivor Novello award for Best Song Musically and Lyrically. As some commentators have noted, the opening melody shares similarities with The Miracles' iconic *The Tears Of A Clown* (co-written by Stevie Wonder), whether by accident or design, again subtly leaning into the record's wider Motown vibe.

⑧ HERE COMES THAT SINKING FEELING

A title that appears to casually reference another Great American Songbook classic: *You've Lost That Loving Feeling*, but with a characteristic ironic twist. It takes a while to get going, eventually building up to a driving beat with chugging guitars and more horn stabs. It's one of only a few moments when it feels like the band are coasting. Running to more than five-and-a-half minutes, it's twice as long as it needs to be.

⑨ BETTER TO HAVE LOST IN LOVE (THAN NEVER TO HAVE LOVED AT ALL)

The album closes out with a heavy feeling from the synth string riff – vaguely reminiscent of *Sweet Dreams* – and aggressive tom-tom rhythm on Olle Romo's drums. Again, there's something of a Christine McVie vibe, but with stodgier production. But as it opens out into the chorus, the fog is lifted to a lighter, more optimistic outlook, as referenced in the way that Annie's voice soars over chiming bells. An interesting melodic and chord transition rescues an otherwise slightly anodyne chorus into something richer and more unexpected.

and, in doing so, retaining the life and freshness. As with their approach on *Touch*, they achieve an accomplished production, without sounding overly-engineered, capturing the energy of the performance.

Sisters Are Doin' It For Themselves was recorded in Detroit, due to having both Aretha Franklin and the Heartbreakers performing on the track (a separate set-up from the main 'house band' deployed on the remainder of the record). The track was laid down at United Sound Systems, where many classic records were cut, just down the road from the home of Motown.

TAKING TIME OUT

With all that output, something had to give. Annie developed nodules in her throat, preventing the pair from touring the record. It was for this same reason that the pair were conspicuously absent at Live Aid. One might say this didn't do the record's performance any harm. But the question is: might the album and singles have been even bigger had they been able to properly promote it? Nevertheless, no expense was spared with the videos for singles, which enjoyed strong rotation on MTV.

Be Yourself Tonight spent a total of 21 weeks in the UK Top 10

© Alamy

The *Be Yourself Tonight* album boasts some of Annie Lennox's finest vocal performances

> “QUALMS OVER THE AUTHENTICITY OF THEIR 60s SOUL MAKEOVER SEEM CHURLISH… IF ANYTHING, THEIR EVOLUTION HIGHLIGHTS NOT ONLY THE PAIR'S AUDACITY, BUT THEIR DEXTERITY IN PULLING IT OFF.”

Rolling Stone didn't exactly heap on the praise upon release, calling Lennox “a skilful mimic” but concluding “she simply ain't got no soul”. But qualms over the authenticity of their 60s soul makeover seem churlish at best. If anything, their evolution highlights not only the pair's audacity, but their dexterity in pulling it off. Annie and Aretha come off as equal contemporaries – no shrinking violets here. Often, a long list of collaborators is a surefire sign of flailing confidence in the main artist's own abilities. But honestly, they don't need the help. *Be Yourself Tonight* stands up confidently on its own two feet.

ROCK'N'SOUL CROSSOVER

Stylistically, it was their most focussed LP yet. Certainly, some cuts feel underdeveloped compared to others, as if so much energy went into the big singles, that the momentum couldn't be entirely sustained. And *Adrian*'s understated dignity makes the track feel like it belongs elsewhere. But, while the hits are undeniably front-loaded, the album as a whole is by no means short on steam.

Sisters… and *Would I Lie To You?* would each earn Grammy nominations, in the R&B and Rock categories respectively, highlighting how Eurythmics managed to successfully straddle the divide. The record was also up for British Album of the Year at the BRITs, where Stewart won Best Producer. He would also go on to work with Alison Moyet and Mick Jagger, all while knocking out the next Eurythmics long-player.

Of course, the group were only halfway through their run at this point. The swift follow-up, *Revenge*, carried on where this one left off, with the band finally fulfilling the huge 1986/87 world tour Eurythmics had previously been deprived of.

But *Be Yourself Tonight* still stands tall as one of their most confident records. The duo would perform *Would I Lie To You?* at a rare 2019 reunion and during their three-song set at their 2022 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction, cementing its place in their canon, while its parent album is heavily represented on their greatest hits packages.

Be Yourself Tonight displays a raw and energised Eurythmics in all their imperial pomp and splendour. By design, its sound is characteristic of its era – once derided for its brash excess, but since finding new favour in a post-irony world, where unapologetically feel-good music can be enjoyed simply for what it is. ■

THE VIDEOS ▶▶

WOULD I LIE TO YOU?

The video plays out like a mini movie, echoing Michael Jackson's productions of the era. The band warm up backstage, waiting for Annie who hasn't showed up yet. She appears on the back of a motorcycle driven by her love interest (actor Steven Bauer, of *Scarface*). Their toxic relationship provides the basis for the plot. Look out for the late Clem Burke of Blondie on drums. It was directed by Mary Lambert, who produced major videos for Madonna and Janet Jackson (and was originally due to direct Prince's *Under The Cherry Moon*).

THERE MUST BE AN ANGEL (PLAYING WITH MY HEART)

The record's second promo video finds Eurythmics in the court of the Sun King, Louis XIV, played with gusto by Stewart, who watches a performance featuring Lennox as one of the angelic damsels, in an uncharacteristically feminine, long-flowing blonde wig. The video, directed by Eddie Arno and Mark Innocenti, was filmed at the New Wimbledon Theatre. The period drama treatment is later referenced by Annie in the promo for *Walking On Broken Glass*, featuring a similar regency setting.

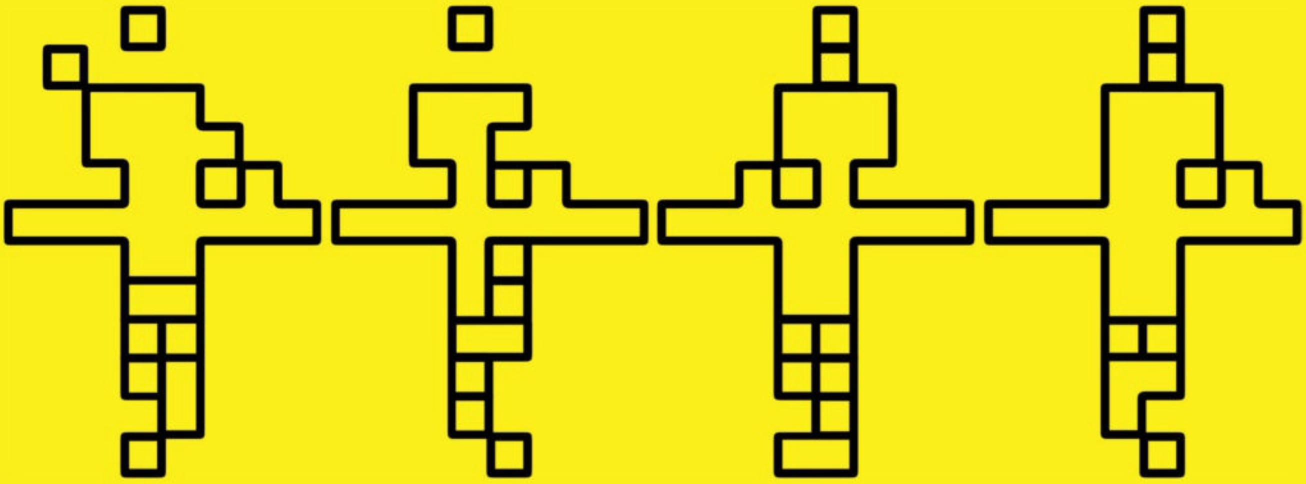
SISTERS ARE DOIN' IT FOR THEMSELVES

The two divas, Annie Lennox and Aretha Franklin, take to the stage together – filmed at Detroit's Music Hall. True to the lyrics, their performance is intercut with footage suggesting the empowering of women (including from the movie, *A Kind Of Loving*). However, the message is shattered when Stewart appears halfway through to perform an over-the-top ‘guitar god’ section – it's an incongruous moment, perhaps intended to be ironic given how he hams it up.

IT'S ALRIGHT (BABY'S COMING BACK)

The most technically advanced video of the lot, the treatment echoes the synth-pop vibe of the track with sharp geometric animated elements, contrasting with neon-tinged footage of Annie and Dave cut out over the visuals. The narrative takes the idea of a man subconsciously aware that his partner has been hit in a car accident, and making his way home to find her. Cue lots of quickfire synth-wave-inspired visuals, reminiscent of the sci-fi movie, *Tron*.

KRAFTWERK



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Appetite for destruction

One of the greatest dark pop records ever made, Soft Cell's second full album saw Marc Almond and Dave Ball live up to *The Art Of Falling Apart*'s title. A mixture of fame comedown and gleeful anarchy, the duo tell us how pulp fiction, drugs, a very different New York and, er, *Tiswas* contributed to a twisted masterpiece.

JOHN EARLS

SOFT CELL
The Art of Falling Apart

When Soft Cell were art students at Leeds Polytechnic, Marc Almond wrote a song in the vein of *Ziggy Stardust* about a fictional band breaking up.

Four years later, when Soft Cell had been informed by their record label Phonogram that they needed to start thinking about a full follow-up to *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*, Dave Ball remembered his bandmate's seemingly prophetic blast of anarchic mayhem.

"I remember saying to Marc that we had a track from college that would make a brilliant title for a follow-up album," smiles Ball, bright and jokey at his South London flat. "I told him *The Art Of Falling Apart* was one of his best song titles. That song is the genius of Marc. My only genius is for remembering a song title he'd probably forgotten about."

Ironically, Almond has forgotten the track's genesis again when he's reminded of its key role in shaping Soft Cell's future. "It's such a strong, anthemic song," he considers. "It wasn't one that was among the selections for *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*, and I don't remember it as an early demo. But it was a demo that had found new relevance."

For Ball, the title summarised how Soft Cell were feeling at being unsettled by becoming accidental pop stars. He explains: "We'd had massive success and wanted to destroy it in front of the fans. That's very Ziggy Stardust. The album started from there, being about a pop band that self-destructs." Of course, what had begun as a college tribute had become real for Soft Cell, as Almond notes: "In the early days, we hadn't been through some of the things for me to write and sing *The Art Of Falling Apart*'s lyrics with experience and conviction."

As with the rest of the album, Almond certainly sings its title track with conviction. Even by his standards, there's an intensity to his vocals, matched by Ball's →

Soft Cell went even further into the dark heart of pop by following up debut album *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* with *The Art Of Falling Apart*

© Peter Ashworth

Dave Ball considers *The Art Of Falling Apart* to be Soft Cell's punk album in its artistic approach

claustrophobic, grimy music. It's a record that still leaves Almond with mixed feelings, as he says: "Musically, I think it's fantastic. But it's just not a loveable record, as it's so bleak and dark. Some of the best records aren't loveable: I think *Berlin* is Lou Reed's best album, but do I love it, can I listen to it all the time? I'm not sure."

RAW POWER

Ball views its nihilism as making for their punk record, reasoning: "*The Art Of Falling Apart* is a punk album in the way that we approached it. It's a lot rawer than *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret,* but it's also more sophisticated and darker. It's how we were feeling at that point."

That Soft Cell were spooked by success is at least in part down to their roots as performance art students. Almond and Ball were outsiders, suddenly at the heart of the mainstream. Many musicians don't enjoy the promotional treadmill, but for artists who had mixed *Tainted Love* with the murk and glamour of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret,* it triggered a full-on existential crisis.

"The business side of it all became relentless," sighs Ball. "We'd give the same answers 50 or 60 times a day in interviews, then perform the same three songs 12 times on TV shows. The darkness of fame came from the boredom of repetition."

Being on TV literally made Almond sick, as he recalls: "We viewed success differently to a lot of our peers. For us, it wasn't about wearing party hats or getting thrown into a pool of foam on *Tiswas.* That actually happened to me, and I found it humiliating. The foam made me ill for a week, as I swallowed a load of soapsuds."

Of course, there were upsides to fame, as Almond ponders: "It was great to have this huge audience. Making videos, being on *Top Of The Pops,* recording in New York: that was fantastic. Success was a double-edged sword, but big success was a revenge for all those who had bullied me, or put me down, and I enjoyed that."

Biting the Big Apple: The duo's second album was shaped by the sounds of New York's club scene

Ball also enjoyed New York, and being able to expand his synthesizer collection, joking: "I loved being able to afford my first home, having money and travelling, which makes me sound like a Miss World."

If the darkness was winning out, it resulted in obvious problems, as Ball concedes: "Newfound wealth meant we could afford newfound drugs, like cocaine, to relieve that boredom. I know that's a cliché, but it's a cliché for a good reason, because it works for so many bands."

Almond lists the pressures contributing to him and Ball starting to drift apart, stating: "We became distant from each other through lots of outside forces: record company pressures, media demands and a manager who, at best, I could say was unconventional and didn't help us in the right direction."

Almond calls Soft Cell's then-manager, Some Bizzare boss Stevo, "a destructive force", adding: "No-one was steering the ship and it ran aground. We were exhausted from three very high-pressured, chaotic years and, yes, we had addictions, too. We felt we had lost ourselves."

That the duo were able to pour those frustrations and addictions into songs like *Forever The Same, Kitchen Sink Drama* and *Heat* would have been a mighty achievement in any circumstances. However, Almond believes it was natural for him and Ball to rally, saying: "During the making of *The Art Of Falling Apart,* we had a very strong creative connection.

"Dave and I have always been very different people, but creatively we're like jigsaw pieces that fit together. We fill in the gaps that the other doesn't do."

NEEDING SPACE

For Ball, it was simply that relentlessness of the promotional treadmill that changed Soft Cell's relationship, as he reasons: "We wanted our own space, as we saw each other so much professionally. We didn't want to see each other all the time when we weren't working, which pushed us apart. When we did drugs, I had my own bunch of people and so did Marc.

"You build your own clique, but we didn't drift apart as a creative force. It's how we've always been ever since, really; still making records off and on, always being a creative force when we're on."

Classic Pop's writer was only 10 when *The Art Of Falling Apart* was released, and it opened up a world of otherness within music. It's a notion that gratifies Almond and Ball, as the latter grins: "T-Rex's *Electric Warrior* and *The Slider* came into my life around that same age you were. They blew my mind, too. Musically, *The Art Of Falling Apart* is my version of *The Slider.*"

Almond takes up the theme of messing with impressionable fans' minds: "We loved

***The Art Of Falling Apart* entered the UK Albums Chart at No.5 in January 1983**

© Peter Ashworth

> **"Success is seductive. We thought we were making pop music of a kind, but we just had more ambition with things we were doing."**
>
> **MARC ALMOND**

the idea that we had this platform of a large audience. As former art students, we loved being subversive, and to be subversive you have to be in the mainstream. We didn't really think or care whether Phonogram would like it or not. They didn't. At the time, it was the statement we wanted to make."

For all its chaos, *The Art Of Falling Apart* has some great melodies at its core, one reason it's aged so well 42 years later. Almond recalls: "Success is seductive. We thought we were making pop music of a kind, but we just had more ambition with things we were doing. We thought that, to have a legacy, albums had to be as important as singles, whether that was right or wrong."

He and Ball have said before that not including the standalone classic No.2 hit *Torch* on the album was a mistake. For Ball, what he calls "Being stubborn, stupid and conceited, as usual" in *Torch*'s omission was made worse because that had been an accidental success anyway. As he says: "*Torch* wasn't an obvious hit in the first place. We hadn't intended it to be a big pop song, it's a song which just happened to be very popular."

Almond considers *It's A Mug's Game,* the B-side of first single *Where The Heart Is,* as worthy of the LP, admitting: "Not putting that on the album was probably a

Dave Ball
In Strict Tempo

Torment and tempos

The Art Of Falling Apart was made after both Marc Almond and Dave Ball began solo careers, Ball with his album *In Strict Tempo* and producing The Virgin Prunes, while Almond released two LPs with Marc And The Mambas.

Almond reflects: "The outside projects helped our confidence as musicians, and certainly broadened our musical horizons. I think Soft Cell became too small a vehicle for all the ideas we were both having."

Of the second Mambas album, *Torment And Toreros,* Almond theorises: "I always thought it was a breakdown set to music. Although it's completely different in musical style, it fits quite well with *The Art Of Falling Apart.*"

Ball is more light-hearted about his own solo music, saying: "*In Strict Tempo* was just me faffing around. I just wanted to know how studios worked. It was basically me looking at all the buttons on a studio desk and thinking: 'Surely they can't all do something different?' and realising that, no, they don't."

Working with The Virgin Prunes wasn't an earnest plot to become a big-name producer, even though he eventually co-produced *Impossible Princess,* Kylie's 1997 album. "Becoming a successful pop producer was never on the agenda," he insists. "Things worked oddly for me in dribs and drabs, like working with Billie Ray Martin and eventually Kylie. Little bits of pop fabulousness just came my way."

© Mike Owen

After *The Art Of Falling Apart*, Soft Cell have released three more studio albums, with their sixth, *Danceteria*, due next spring

mistake, too, as it was hugely popular."

Instead, the album's second single *Numbers* was the clearest sign that Soft Cell were not about to release another *Tainted Love*. Inspired by John Rechy's 1967 cult gay novel of the same name, *Numbers* is what Ball accurately calls: "Messed-up funk. It's like someone on ketamine trying to make a funk record, or funk if you're coming up on smack."

"*Numbers* was such a dark song to ever be released as a single," acknowledges Almond. "I don't really know why it ever was. It was quite out there, certainly not what Phonogram wanted from Soft Cell.

"Even now, I don't really like doing *Numbers* live. It's just too bleak, as is *Baby Doll*."

Ah yes, *Baby Doll*, Soft Cell's cheery tale of the realities of strippers, named after Almond and Ball's favourite New York strip club. "*Baby Doll* is one of my favourite Soft Cell songs," says Ball. "We liked the name of the club, and then we got to know one of its workers. This was information we'd never have come into contact with before, at a time when Marc and I were into finding experiences and making them real. In the early 80s, New York was there for the taking. London had some good clubs but New York had lots more of them. And they were *heavier*, too."

The album was far from unrelentingly bleak, as highlighted by *Hendrix Medley*, their cover of the legendary guitarist's classics *Voodoo Chile*, *Purple Haze* and *Hey Joe* done as proto-electro. The pair had taken a strain of acid called Purple Haze when Hendrix's song came on. Considering *The Art Of Falling Apart* was recorded in New York where the guitarist made his *Electric Ladyland* album, making *Hendrix Medley* added to what Almond calls: "The fun part of making that album – a mad studio jam that didn't have a lot of planning." Ball adds: "It was a tongue-in-cheek tribute, but we really were both massive Hendrix fans. There's an irony to an electronic band covering Hendrix, but in my opinion he's still the greatest rock guitarist."

MANIC MARTIN

The album's other song from their college days, goth classic *Martin*, was also not entirely serious, even if its lengthy manias are incredibly claustrophobic. Ball cites it as typical of the darker books and films inspiring Soft Cell at the time, as Almond reflects: "*Martin* didn't fit in with the more obvious pop of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret*, but it worked on the next album."

Inspired by reading the book which became a George A. Romero cult horror classic, Almond says of the 10-minute chiller: "A story about an alienated psychotic teenager who either thought he was a vampire, or really was a vampire, was part of the Soft Cell world. I'm very happy if *Martin* is a goth classic, and I love performing it: the galloping electro rhythm and dark, jarring synth sounds are really exciting, especially live."

As with *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* before, *The Art Of Falling Apart* has now become a luxurious 6CD set. It actually suits a record which saw Soft Cell become respected as an albums band. Citing *Heat* as his favourite song – "Hot and humid, with lots of dark, pent-up sexuality" – Almond considers: "Maybe we should do the whole album live at some point, though it's not easy."

Ball, meanwhile, is delighted that his and Almond's plans to become an albums band paid off. "Making *The Art Of Falling Apart* made good artistic sense for us, and it's an album we're still talking about," he points out. "It's great that people remember it so much. I guess it is a strange record, but no-one died. That's always a good sign." ■

● *The Art Of Falling Apart* is reissued by UMR on 31 October and reviewed on page 89

New York nights

Next year will see Soft Cell's sixth full album, after 2022's **Happiness Not Included* returned the pair to the UK's Top 10 – 39 years after *The Art Of Falling Apart* reached No.5.

The album will be called *Danceteria*, after the New York nightclub Soft Call frequented while making their first two records. "Marc and I were drawn to the same dark places," says Ball. "We were lucky to go to New York in the early 80s, when clubs like Danceteria were still around."

The new record isn't a replica of the sound of Danceteria's playlists, however, as Ball explains: "New York and the madness that went through it was an influence on our lives in the early 80s, but the new album is very modern sounding."

Ball is in a wheelchair since he broke his back in an accident shortly before the release of **Happiness Not Included*. He spent seven months in hospital, which has influenced *Danceteria*. He says: "I had strange recollections when I was in and out of hospital, because I was on morphine. The new songs are a digital reflection of the sounds in my head from that time. In parallel, it's about the times me and Marc got up to in the 80s. It's looking backwards and forwards, the creative times we've had and how we feel about life now. I live in a fourth floor flat today, but I was on the 24th floor of the same building when I wrote most of these songs. Overlooking central London, for my first high-rise album, felt very futuristic."

The duo recorded separately, but Ball smiles: "Doing stuff over the web has been a psychic collaboration between us."

© Andrew Whitton

SOFT CELL

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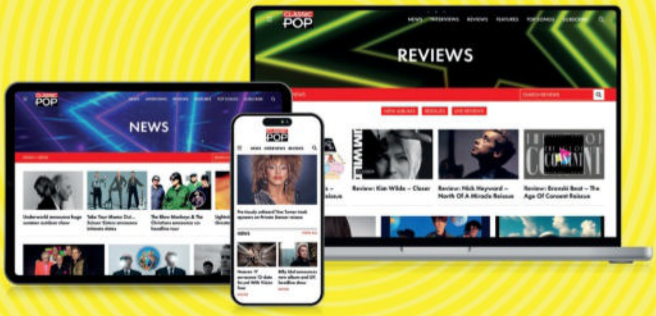
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MARIAH CAREY

PART OF THE DIVA HOLY TRINITY ALONGSIDE WHITNEY HOUSTON AND CELINE DION, MARIAH CAREY – WHO RELEASED HER 16TH ALBUM *HERE FOR IT ALL* ON 26 SEPTEMBER – HAS REMAINED RELEVANT BY COMBINING HER TRADEMARK POWER BALLADS WITH CUTTING-EDGE R&B POP

JON O'BRIEN

MARIAH CAREY

“When I heard and saw Mariah, there was absolutely no doubt that she was in every way destined for superstardom,” Sony Music boss Tommy Mottola once remarked to *The New York Times* about the formidable vocal powerhouse (and future wife) whose early career he'd famously control. Indeed, ever since freestyle singer Brenda K. Starr helped alert the industry to her talents, Carey was tipped for greatness. And on her remarkable self-titled debut album, she immediately justified all the hype.

Following its release in June 1990, *Mariah Carey* spent 11 weeks atop the Billboard 200, spawned four consecutive Hot 100 No.1s to equal the Jackson 5's long-time record and inspired Grammy voters to award the diva Best New Artist.

Deservedly, lead single *Vision Of Love* also picked up a coveted golden gramophone, its adult contemporary take on 50s doo-wop immediately earmarking Carey as a challenger to Whitney's crown. Her five-octave range was also on full display on the vibrant New Jack Swing of *Someday*, lush Quiet Storm of *All In Your Mind* and rock-tinged *You Need Me*. On *There's Got To Be A Way*, a joyous blue-eyed soul affair which provides a rare detour into political activism (“I don't understand how there can be/ Regulated bigotry”), she first unleashed the kind of glass-shattering whistle register that became her forte.

But the 15-million seller also showcased many of Carey's often overlooked talents, too. Far from being the record label puppet she was often purported to be, the star co-wrote every single one of the album's 11 offerings. In fact, the majority were penned with her friend Ben Margulies long before she signed to Columbia. She also turns producer on the heartbreaking track *Vanishing*, performed with only jazz fusion pianist Richard Tee for company. She even throws in a little bit of rapping on the Paula Abdul-esque dance-pop of *Prisoner*, although admittedly her rhymes are more MC Skat Kat than MC Lyte.

MARIAH'S DEBUT ALBUM SPAWNED FOUR CONSECUTIVE HOT 100 NO.1s TO EQUAL THE JACKSON 5's RECORD

Of course, *Mariah Carey*'s string of overwrought ballads can test the patience. The singer herself was reluctant to record *I Don't Wanna Cry*, expressing concerns that its pure schmaltz would immediately pigeonhole her as a hairbrush in the mirror balladeer. And although it did the chart-topping business, it's hard to see why equally melodramatic closer *Love Takes Time* was desperately rushed through as a last-minute addition. Overall, however, it's easier to see why Carey became one of the most biggest names in 90s pop.

MARIAH CAREY

Released 1990
Label Columbia
Chart Positions
UK No.6 US No.1

MARIAH CAREY
EMOTIONS

Such was *Mariah Carey*'s dominance that despite shifting eight million copies, producing a fifth US No.1 single and bagging two further Grammy nods (including Producer of the Year), follow-up *Emotions* was still regarded as a sophomore slump.

Sure, it's perhaps the least essential listen from the diva's imperial phase, and in the UK at least her most unfamiliar, too (it's her only 90s album which failed to produce a Top 10 hit). But with collaborator Walter Afanasieff the sole behind-the-scenes holdover, it proved that Carey wasn't interested in resting on her laurels.

The recruitment of C+C Music Factory, who'd only just scored a massive Stateside chart-topper of their own with *Gonna Make You Sweat (Everybody Dance Now)*, showed that while often marketed as traditional pop, Carey had her fingers firmly on the contemporary pulse.

The duo's first contribution, the title track opener *Emotions*, delivered a knockout, with its euphoric head-over-heels declarations and nods to The Emotions' *Best Of My Love* creating one of Carey's most feel-good bops. The bass-driven funk-pop of *Make It Happen*, is almost as soaring. And *To Be Around You* is another solid banger which channels the uplifting post-disco of Cheryl Lynn.

Further proof of how highly regarded Carey had become within the songwriting elite is the presence of Carole King. The legendary hitmaker had initially suggested a cover of her Aretha Franklin standard *(You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman* before being persuaded to co-pen a new number instead. *If It's Over* doesn't reach the same highs, but it's a classicist throwback in which Carey displays her vocal prowess in a more restrained manner than usual.

There are plenty of big-lunged power ballads elsewhere, including the *Unchained Melody*-esque *So Blessed* and despondent break-up anthem *Can't Let Go*, all of which place more emphasis on vocal pyrotechnics than on melodies. Much more impactful is closer *The Wind*, a jazz-tinged eulogy to a late close friend, which proved that Carey didn't always need to sing about love.

HER BIG-LUNGED POWER BALLADS PLACE MORE EMPHASIS ON VOCAL PYROTECHNICS THAN ON MELODIES

EMOTIONS

Released 1991
Label Columbia
Chart Positions
UK No.4 US No.4

MARIAH CAREY
MUSIC BOX

Following her memorable *MTV Unplugged* session which spawned a hit cover of The Jackson 5's *I'll Be There*, Carey returned to the studio for a third LP which elevated her career to another level. Indeed, *Music Box* was the first of two consecutive diamond albums, a clear validation of the diva's insistence on taking more creative control: "Now it's more me coming across," she told MTV at the time. "It's not somebody else's perception of me."

Of course, listeners may wonder exactly how *Hero*, the self-empowering slowie first handed to Gloria Estefan, and *Without You*, the blockbuster rendition of Badfinger's tearjerker which gave Carey her first No.1 this side of the Atlantic, differed from what had gone before. Likewise, the sickly-sweet tale of unrequited love that is *All I've Ever Wanted*, the gloopy title track and dramatic belter *Just To Hold You Once Again*, all suggested she desperately needed to break free from the songwriting shackles of regular partner Afanasieff.

Luckily, *Music Box* had more to offer than the kind of go-for-broke ballads that would later become the bane of every Simon Cowell TV talent show.

The effervescent R&B pop of *I've Been Thinking About You* made you wish she'd clocked in more with its producers C+C Music Factory. Opening lead single *Dreamlover*'s contrasting blend of emphatic New Jack Swing beats and featherlight melodies – this time directly sampling The Emotions – was closer to Janet Jackson's *janet.* than Whitney Houston's *Bodyguard* soundtrack, two of the period's other female-fronted chart behemoths. And backed by a gloriously uplifting church choir and future diva Kelly Price, *Anytime You Need A Friend*'s declaration of devotion instantly joined the canon of gospel pop standards. In fact, it sounded like it had always been there.

Despite the star's pre-release spiel, *Music Box* undoubtedly feels more like the tentative start of a transitional phase than a full-blown reinvention. But as its impressive gargantuan sales confirm, this is the Carey that the general record buying public gravitated towards the most.

MUSIC BOX WAS THE FIRST OF TWO DIAMOND ALBUMS, VALIDATING THE DIVA'S PUSH FOR CREATIVE CONTROL

MUSIC BOX

Released 1993
Label Columbia
Chart Positions
UK No.1 US No.1

Mariah Carey
Merry Christmas

Although recorded as an attempt to better channel her faith through her music, Carey's first holiday album had a knock-on effect which has only grown stronger over the following 30 years. Indeed, for the younger generation, the diva is now better known as the Queen of Christmas than for her record-breaking chart reign.

One track is pretty much responsible for this turn of events. A joyful seasonal pastiche of Phil Spector's Wall of Sound, *All I Want For Christmas Is You* instantly became part of the festive canon upon its 1994 release (even though it was beaten to the Christmas No.1 spot by East 17) and is now as synonymous with the big day as Saint Nick himself.

The two other originals, the lovelorn balladry of *Miss You Most (At Christmas Time)* and the hymnal slow-builder *Jesus Born On This Day*, can't compete, obviously. But a rollicking cover of *Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town* and vintage soul take on *O Holy Night* bring further feel-good vibes, while Carey's melismatic vocals also make their mark on a near-a cappella version of *Silent Night* and gospel house rendition of *Joy To The World*.

Carey's affection for all things Yuletide means that the *Merry Christmas* album feels like a genuine love letter rather than a cynical cash-in.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Released 1994
Label Columbia
Chart Positions
UK No.32 US No.3

While *Butterfly* was defined by the breakdown of her marriage, follow-up *Rainbow* was a much more colourful affair inspired by the first flourishes of a new romance with Luis Miguel. Lovestruck ballads such as *Thank God I Found You* and *After Tonight*, a Diane Warren-on-Autopilot number, suggests the typically aloof diva wasn't exactly playing it cool.

However, *Petals*, a painfully honest account of her troubles with estranged sister Alison, and a saccharine cover of Phil Collins' *Against All Odds* ensured *Rainbow* still contained a smattering of Carey's usual heartbreak.

It even opens with a Jay-Z-assisted, Stacy Lattisaw-sampling jam named *Heartbreaker*. Boasting potty-mouthed rhymes from Da Brat and Missy Elliott, the slinky remix further established Carey's hip-hop credibility. Likewise, collaborations with Snoop Dogg and the boisterous Mystikal, along with the Usher-featuring, Tupac-sampling *How Much*, reinforced her modern street swag.

But Carey's insistence on another Warren-penned plodder, *Can't Take That Away (Mariah's Theme)*, getting a single release, causing a conflict that would ultimately lead to her departure from the record label, hinted that her creative judgement was becoming slightly off-key.

RAINBOW

Released 1999

Label Columbia

Chart Positions

UK No.8

US No.2

MARIAH CAREY
DAYDREAM

Carey's quest for artistic control felt much more pronounced on her fifth LP, another monster-selling affair whose hip-hop and R&B leanings initially left Columbia perturbed. "Everybody was like 'What, are you crazy?'" the diva later revealed to *Entertainment Weekly*. "They're nervous about breaking the formula. It works to have me sing a ballad on stage in a long dress with my hair up."

Daydream doesn't entirely abandon such material. See the resolutely old-school love song *When I Saw You* and the skyscraping take on Journey's *Open Arms* which appeared to kickstart Carey's unlikely fascination with big-haired 80s power ballads. And the US was practically taunted for 16 weeks with *One Sweet Day*, the record-breaking No.1 collaboration with Boyz II Men which, although designed as a tribute to her late producer David Cole, felt more like a vocal gymnastics duel.

However, *Underneath The Stars*, a vinyl-cracking piece of lush soul inspired by Minnie Riperton, and *Melt Away*, a sensuous slow jam featuring a vocal so uncharacteristically deep it was mistaken for producer Babyface's, showed that Carey could slow things down with a sense of restraint.

Of course, *Daydream*'s true game-changer is its opener, the first single ever from a female artist to debut atop the Hot 100. A joyful ode to impossible love, *Fantasy* essentially set the template for the Carey lead single, skilfully interweaving an 80s sample (in this case Tom Tom Club's *Genius Of Love*) through a blend of glistening harmonies, funky basslines and G-funk synths. A remix, featuring Wu Tang Clan's Ol' Dirty Bastard, meanwhile, paved the way for the pop/rap crossover that would become the norm. It's arguably her finest hour. But *Always Be My Baby* runs it a close second, Jermaine Dupri's sparse production and Carey's tender melodies providing a carefree mid-tempo, which as its summer house video highlighted, is perfect for a lakeside rope swing singalong. However, as the confessional closer *Looking In* hinted, not everything in the Carey camp was picture-perfect.

HER RECORD-BREAKING NO.1 COLLABORATION WITH BOYZ II MEN, *ONE SWEET DAY*, FELT LIKE A VOCAL DUEL

DAYDREAM

Released 1995

Label Columbia

Chart Positions

UK No.1 US No.1

MARIAH CAREY

"I mean, people used to think I was the 90s version of Mary Poppins" Carey noted to *The LA Times* while promoting the album which, as its title suggests, represented a metamorphosis, sonically, thematically and visually. Indeed, girl-next-door Mariah was no more. Instead, the diva embraced a more provocative side that Mottola had previously been determined to keep under wraps. It's no coincidence that shortly before *Butterfly*'s release, the music industry power couple announced their split.

Carey's sixth studio effort occasionally alludes to the marriage troubles that came to a head during its recording. Cited as her own favourite ever ballad, the title track is an idealised "if you love them, set them free" plea sung from the perspective of her ex-husband. And on emotive ballad *Close My Eyes*, the singer paints herself as a "wayward child" who perhaps "grew up too soon." But the close proximity of the separation to the finished product meant that gossip hounds had to wait for future albums for a more in-depth relationship post-mortem.

But Carey's canny choice of in-vogue collaborators ensures the record still compels without all the tabloid drama. Missy Elliott, for example, stamps her distinctive mark with the typically forward-thinking R&B of *Babydoll*. Two members of the famously fast-talking trio Bone Thugs-n-Harmony show up to set the pace on the staccato-led *Breakdown*. And now-disgraced hip-hop mogul P Diddy steers Carey further into hip-hop waters with the chunky basslines, assertive beats and classic B-boy samples of lead single *Honey*.

However, Carey's reinvention is at its most convincing when she goes it alone: see the neo-soul of *Fourth Of July* and *The Roof (Back In Time)*, a nocturnal reworking of Mobb Deep's rap classic *Shook Ones* in which she breathily recollects an alfresco encounter.

The Latin-tinged melodrama of *My All* and *The Beautiful Ones*, a cover of Prince's *Purple Rain* cut in which she and Dru Hill's Sisqó seemingly attempt to break the sound barrier, would no doubt have placated the men in suits. But while it occasionally relies on old tricks, *Butterfly* remains the most important chapter of Carey's musical evolution.

THE GIRL-NEXT-DOOR MARIAH WAS NO MORE. INSTEAD, THE DIVA EMBRACED A MORE PROVOCATIVE SIDE.

BUTTERFLY

Released 1997

Label Columbia

Chart Positions

UK No.2 US No.1

MARIAH CAREY
Charmbracelet

“I try to always turn to the positive rather than drown in the negative,” Carey remarked to *Radio And Records* about her damage control ninth album. Indeed, any fans hoping for candid insights into the troubles of the *Glitter* era had to wait another two decades for her memoir. *Charmbracelet*’s default subject was still affairs of the heart.

Even when she did occasionally allude to all the personal drama, it was with the most generic of sentiments. See gospel number *My Saving Grace* and lead single *Through The Rain*, a Hallmark card-esque tale of triumphing over adversity which blatantly attempted to replicate the lung-busting power ballads of her 90s heyday.

Charmbracelet was similarly uninspiring throughout.

Carey had always typically been canny with her lifting of classic hits. But the chipmunk-voiced hook on *Boy (I Need You)* had only appeared on guest star Cam’ron’s Top 20 smash *Oh Boy* six months previously. *You Had Your Chance* and *Subtle Invitation* foreshadowed the kind of mumbling, middling R&B that would later swamp her career. And even the typically magnetic Jay-Z sounds practically bored on the soporific hip-pop of *You Got Me*.

There are a handful of times Carey ventures away from the middle of the road. Answer song *Clown*, for example, was the first, but certainly not the last, time that Mariah took issue with Eminem’s ungentlemanly claims (“You should’ve never intimated we were lovers/ When you know very well we never even touched”). And while many fans of Def Leppard scoffed at her *Bringin’ On The Heartbreak* cover – contrastingly, both Joe Elliott and Phil Collen gave it their full seal of approval – her transformation of the hard rock favourite into a slow-burning rock opera is truly something to behold.

Of course, the fact that the vocalist managed to make it back into the studio at all should be applauded. But far from ninth time the charm, her tentative comeback showed little sign of the dramatic change in creative and commercial fortunes that was just around the corner.

THE FACT THAT THE SINGER MANAGED TO MAKE IT BACK INTO THE STUDIO AT ALL SHOULD BE APPLAUDED

CHARMBRACELET

Released 2002
Label Island
Chart Positions
UK No.52
US No.3

MARIAH CAREY

Joining Whitney Houston’s *My Love Is Your Love* as one of the most astonishing comebacks, *The Emancipation Of Mimi* sold 10 million copies to become the best-selling album of 2005 in the US, earned eight Grammy nominations (winning three) and spawned a 14-week chart-topper that Billboard later crowned Song of the Decade.

Carey certainly didn’t leave anything to chance, recruiting a who’s who of modern R&B hitmakers to guide her return to form, including The Neptunes for the metallic funk of *Say Somethin’* and *To The Floor* and Kanye West on the *Betcha By Golly Wow*-interpolating jam *Stay The Night*. But it was a longtime cohort, Babyface, who provided the standout, with the heartbreak anthem *We Belong Together* taking up residence atop the Hot 100 for essentially the entire summer.

While the record, which references her own nickname, undoubtedly had one eye on total world-conquering, chart-topping dominance, Carey doesn’t sacrifice the quirks that helped sustain her career beyond the adult contemporary world.

There are 80s samples galore (the slinky *Get Your Number* borrows from both Imagination and Steve Arrington, while there are several nods to New York’s nascent hip-hop scene).

There’s a gospel devotional featuring bible recitals from her childhood pastor (*Fly Like A Bird*), while the Fatman Scoop-guesting *It’s Like That* boasts the truly baffling but iconic couplet, “Caution, it’s so explosive/ Them chickens is ash and I’m lotion.”

No one could accuse Carey of jumping on any bandwagons.

“The album is not about making the older executives happy by making a bring-down-the-house, tearjerker ballad,” Carey explained to *MTV* about the lack of her once-signature style. Indeed, as its title suggests, it is a free-spirited, fun-filled affair which now plays like a greatest hits (*Don’t Forget About Us*, a cut from its expanded edition, also topped the Hot 100).

Proof that you can never keep an octave-spanning diva down for too long.

CAREY RECRUITS A WHO’S WHO OF MODERN R&B HITMAKERS TO GUIDE HER RETURN TO FORM

THE EMANCIPATION OF MIMI

Released 2005
Label Island
Chart Positions
UK No.7 US No.1

glitter
MARIAH

“The pop equivalent of Chernobyl” read one AllMusic review of the album that nearly sank Carey’s career – evidence of the hyperbolic pile-on that she was subjected to at the time. Sure, the same-named film in which she starred as an aspiring singer was a cinematic car crash. But its soundtrack is far from as catastrophic.

Ironically, considering all the drama that was to follow, *Glitter* remains Carey’s most feel-good album, with names such as Jam & Lewis, Cameo and Rick James helping to root its dozen tracks in the roller rink post-disco of the 1980s. Covers of *Didn’t Mean To Turn You On* and *Last Night A DJ Saved My Life* also amplify the nostalgic vibes.

Admittedly, the party is occasionally stalled by the dreaded gloopy ballad, with *Lead The Way* more concerned with breaking Carey’s note-sustaining record (18 seconds) than providing a hook. But had *Glitter* not been associated with such an ill-advised vanity project, it wouldn’t have become shorthand for pop disaster.

Of course, while Carey was in fine form musically, her mental health was unravelling. And after a troubling appearance on MTV and various erratic online posts, she was hospitalised for exhaustion and Virgin – who’d only just paid $100 million for her services – quickly paid for her to go away.

GLITTER

Released 2001
Label Virgin
Chart Positions
UK No.10
US No.7

Now fully embracing her Mrs Santa Claus persona, Carey hoped lightning would strike twice with another album of carols, seasonal pop hits and new compositions aiming for that annual payday. The sumptuous orchestral ballad *Christmas Time Is In The Air Again* is the best of the four originals, although there's a giddy charm to *Oh Santa!*, a 60s girl group pastiche which throws in everything but the kitchen sink.

Elsewhere, Mariah's mother Patricia pops up to lend a hand on *O Come All Ye Faithful* and *Housetop Celebration* transports *Here Comes Santa Claus* and *Up On The Housetop* to the graffiti-strewn streets of 1980s Harlem in an old-school hip-hop medley. But while its Yuletide predecessor appeared to be made with love, this all feels more like a contractual obligation which relies a little too much on former glories.

Indeed, it's slightly telling that *O Holy Night* is taken from a 2000 recording at Los Angeles church the WPC.

There's a similar "this will do" approach to an 'Extra Festive' version of *All I Want For Christmas Is You* and a god-awful house-lite rendition of *Auld Lang Syne* likely to have Robert Burns rolling in his grave. Not exactly a lump of coal, but far from the shiniest present under the tree either.

MERRY CHRISTMAS II YOU

Released 2010
Label Island
Chart Positions
UK No.101 US No.4

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" appeared to be the mantra for *E=MC²*, which continued Carey's remarkable trajectory by posting the highest first-week sales of her glittering career. Indeed, practically an official sequel, the diva's 11th LP once again bridged the gap between pop, hip-hop and R&B while leaning far more towards themes of human biology than quantum physics.

None more so than on *Touch My Body*, an instructional bedroom jam ("If it's a camera up in here/ Then I best not catch this flick on YouTube") whose parodic video showcased Carey's previously hidden sense of humour. But the DeBarge-sampling *I'll Be Lovin' U Long Time*, Damian Marley-featuring *Cruise Control* and disco-infused *I'm That Chick* are also heavily in thrall to the diva's lascivious side.

She does dig a little deeper on the biblical closer *I Wish You Well* and *Side Effects*, the latter hinting that her marriage to Mottola may have been even more traumatic than first expressed.

But footloose and fancy-free are the default modes of a record that gleefully sticks to Carey's winning formula.

E=MC²
MARIAH

E=MC²

Released 2008
Label Island
Chart Positions
UK No.3
US No.1

After the all-star line-ups of her previous Noughties records, Carey switched things up for album number 12. Indeed, guest stars are notably absent and it largely hands all production duties to Tricky Stewart and The-Dream. *Memoirs Of An Imperfect Angel*, therefore, is the diva at her most personal and most cohesive, too.

Carey certainly doesn't hold back on the feisty boom-bap of *Obsessed*, another diatribe against The Real Slim Shady ("Got you all fired up with your Napoleon complex/ See right through you like you're bathing in Windex"). Nor the Love Unlimited-sampling *It's A Wrap*, kiss-off *Up Out My Face* or opener *Betcha Gon' Know* in which her unique revenge plan involves exposing a love cheat on Oprah.

But having just wed her second husband, Nick Cannon, Carey is also in a more romanticised mode, too, whether the sensual *The Impossible* or latest 80s soft rock cover, in this case Foreigner's *I Want To Know What Love Is*.

A few more changes of pace wouldn't have gone amiss – it's a shame nothing from the abandoned Timbaland sessions made the cut. But its imperfections are outweighed by its charms.

MARIAH CAREY
Memoirs of an Imperfect Angel

MEMOIRS OF AN IMPERFECT ANGEL

Released 2009
Label Island
Chart Positions
UK No.23 US No.3

Carey soon returned to the safety net of a larger hit-making team for a 14th album which took her penchant for ridiculous clunky titles to new heights. Alongside regular cohorts Dupri, Rodney Jerkins and Bryan-Michael Cox, *Me. I Am Mariah... The Elusive Chanteuse* also features guest spots from Nas on *Dedicated*, Fabolous on *Money ($ * / ...)* and a harmonica-playing Stevie Wonder on *Make It Look Good*. She even ropes in her own newborn twins to coo on alternative lullaby *Supernatural*.

But it's R&B lothario Miguel who turns out to be the album's greatest asset, his honeyed tones playing off wonderfully against Carey's on a throwback which sounds like it came fresh from the Stax Records factory. A US No.15 hit, *#Beautiful* is a strong contender for one of her very best.

A gospel cover of George Michael's *One More Try*, showbiz satire *Meteorite* and self-aggrandising diss track *Thirsty* ("Best thing that happened to your ass was me") proved, however, that Carey could still compel entirely on her own.

ME. I AM
MARIAH

ME. I AM MARIAH...

Released 2014
Label Def Jam
Chart Positions
UK No.14 US No.3

A Las Vegas residency risked placing Carey in the realm of heritage act. Yet she bounced back with the freshest and, contrary to its modest sales, most relevant entry in her discography.

From Slick Rick's languorous rhymes and Dev Hynes' typically chameleonic production to Carey's old-school shoutouts ("Feeling myself like I'm Norma Jean"), *Giving Me Life*, in particular, oozes the kind of Pitchfork-friendly cool that had previously been elusive. Elsewhere, opener *GTFO* continues her penchant for brutal kiss-offs while giving a Porter Robinson EDM banger an ethereal slow jam twist. The utterly addictive *A No No* updates the sassy feminist R&B spearheaded by TLC.

Following *Caution*'s disappointing reception, Carey then enjoyed her longest-ever studio hiatus. Earlier this year, however, she announced *Here For It All* – the diva's 16th LP and first release through her own imprint, Mariah. She told *Forbes* it was all about "owning my narrative and creating freely on my own terms..." Perhaps, now, the emancipation of Mimi has finally been fully realised. ■

CAUTION

Released 2018
Label Epic
Chart Positions
UK No.40
US No.5

NICK HEYWARD
1993 –1998
THE EPIC & CREATION YEARS

NICK HEYWARD
1993-1998
THE EPIC & CREATION YEARS

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IAN DURY
"TOO NUTTY TO BE NAUGHTY"
STUDIO RECORDINGS
1977 - 2002

IAN DURY
"TOO NUTTY TO BE NAUGHTY"
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CD 6
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CLASSIC POP TOP TEN

WEEK ENDING 24 NOVEMBER 1979

DR HOOK SERVE UP A LOVESTRUCK CHART-TOPPER, WHILE WELLER TAKES A SATIRICAL POP AT ELITE PRIVILEGE AND THE NUTTY BOYS GO ONE STEP BEYOND

STEVE O'BRIEN

01 (1) **WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN**
DR HOOK (CAPITOL)

▲ 02 (3) **CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE**
QUEEN
(EMI)

WHEN YOU'RE IN LOVE WITH A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN
DR HOOK (CAPITOL)

If, like Alan Partridge, you were confused as to whether Dr Hook was a fully qualified medical practitioner then note that you wouldn't call this band if you were suffering chest pains. The same goes for Dr Feelgood, Doctor And The Medics and Nurse With Wound. Formed in New Jersey in 1969 and responsible for one of 1979's hottest sellers with this yacht rock evergreen, Dr Hook had been bothering the UK hit parade since 1972, but this Even Stevens-penned number would be their first chart-topper here. The track originally appeared on their 1978 LP *Pleasure And Pain*; however, after riding the disco wave and selling more than a million copies, it was subsequently added to 1979's album *Sometimes You Win*. *When You're In Love With A Beautiful Woman* topped the chart for three weeks before it was replaced by The Police's *Walking On The Moon*.

STILL
COMMODORES (MOTOWN)

A typically silken ballad from the one-time funk titans, this seemed machine-tooled to become a first-dance wedding favourite. From the Grammy-nommed *Midnight Magic* album, it followed *Three Times A Lady*'s blueprint of lush strings and Lionel Richie's seductive croon. Released in September 1979, it topped the US Hot 100 for a week in November and ruled the R&B chart for six, while hitting No.4 in the UK. As Richie's last big hit with the band before going solo in 1982, it cemented their legacy as Motown's ballad kings, though old-time fans grumbled at the smoother sound. A cover version was released a couple of years later, when *The Dukes Of Hazzard*'s "Bo" Duke – aka actor John Schneider – recorded it as the B-side to *Them Good Ol' Boys Are Bad*, which made No.13 on Billboard's country listing.

CRAZY LITTLE THING CALLED LOVE
QUEEN (EMI)

By the end of the 70s, Queen were arena rock deities, but *Crazy Little Thing Called Love* showed Freddie Mercury could knock out a rockabilly jewel in just 10 minutes while luxuriating in a hotel bath and channelling his inner Elvis. This was waxed for the band's eighth album *The Game* with Brian May swapping his Red Special for a Telecaster to nail that twangy, Paul Burlison vibe. Released in October, it hit No.2 in the UK – a queen blocked by a doctor – but soared to No.1 on Billboard's Hot 100 for four weeks in February 1980, Queen's first US chart-topper. The promo video, with a leather-clad Freddie cavorting with Hot Gossip-styled dancers, captured the band's playful irreverence. It's been covered by everyone from country music singer Dwight Yoakam to Diana Ross to The Chipmunks, not a boast every band can make.

THE ETON RIFLES
THE JAM (POLYDOR)

This mod-punk firecracker took aim at class warfare, inspired by a 1978 clash between unemployed marchers and jeering Eton College pupils during a Right To Work protest. Paul Weller penned it on a rainy holiday in Selsey Bill, packing in satirical pokes at elite privilege ("Compose a revolutionary symphony/ Then went to bed with a charming young thing"). The only single taken from fourth LP *Setting Sons*, it was crowned track of the year by the *NME*, but irony struck when Old Etonian – and then-Conservative leader – David Cameron named it a favourite in 2008. "It was a great song with brilliant lyrics," he told *The Guardian*. "I've always thought that if you can only like music if you agree with the political views of the person who wrote it, well, it'd be rather limiting."

▲ **03** (4) **THE ETON RIFLES**
THE JAM
(POLYDOR)

▼ **04** (5) **STILL**
COMMODORES
(MOTOWN)

▼ **05** (2) **ONE DAY AT A TIME**
LENA MARTELL
(PYE)

▲ **06** (14) **NO MORE TEARS (ENOUGH IS ENOUGH)**
DONNA SUMMER AND BARBRA STREISAND
(CASABLANCA)

▼ **07** (6) **GIMME! GIMME! GIMME!**
(A MAN AFTER MIDNIGHT)
ABBA (EPIC)

▲ **08** (15) **KNOCKED IT OFF**
B.A. ROBERTSON
(ASYLUM)

▲ **09** (16) **LADIES NIGHT**
KOOL & THE GANG
(MERCURY)

▲ **10** (22) **ONE STEP BEYOND...**
MADNESS
(STIFF)

ONE DAY AT A TIME
LENA MARTELL
(PYE)

Not one of the hippest singles on this week's rundown (we can't imagine there were many people who bought both *The Eton Rifles* and this, unless the latter was a present for Auntie Joan), this was a Christian country and western weepie ("One day at a time sweet Jesus, that's all I'm asking from You/ Just give me the strength, to do every day, what I have to do") written by Kris Kristofferson and Marijohn Wilkin. Though this was Lena Martell's sole hit in the UK, she was already a known name, having fronted a run of TV variety shows on the BBC, and was clearly well-loved enough for a Best Of collection to hit No.13 on the album chart in 1977. Now aged 85, she has long since retired, having hung up her mic in 2008.

GIMME! GIMME! GIMME! (A MAN AFTER MIDNIGHT)
ABBA (EPIC)

ABBA's disco banger captured nocturnal loneliness with Agnetha's yearning vocals over Benny and Björn's synth hooks (courtesy of the ARP Odyssey), waxed at Stockholm's Polar Studios in August 1979. A standalone 45 to hype their tour, not on *Voulez-Vous* but added to *Greatest Hits Vol.2*, it topped the hit parades of Belgium, Switzerland, Finland, France and Ireland and peaked at No.3 in Blighty. In 1999, the song would lend its name to the Kathy Burke/James Dreyfus sitcom and six years later, was sampled by Madonna for one of her finest 21st century numbers, the glorious *Hung Up* (with Ulvaeus and Andersson credited as co-writers). In July, the track surpassed one billion streams on Spotify, becoming the quartet's second song to reach that milestone, following *Dancing Queen*.

LADIES NIGHT
KOOL & THE GANG (MERCURY)

Kool & The Gang's club classic marked a commercial rebirth with new vocalist J.T. Taylor and producer Eumir Deodato. Released in September 1979, it made No.8 on the US Hot 100, topped the R&B chart for three weeks, and reached No.9 in the UK, kickstarting their career here (even 1973's *Jungle Boogie* – a hit in the States – had stiffed in Britain). It was later sampled by Lil' Kim and covered by Atomic Kitten who took it to No.8.

MADNESS
ONE STEP BEYOND... (STIFF)

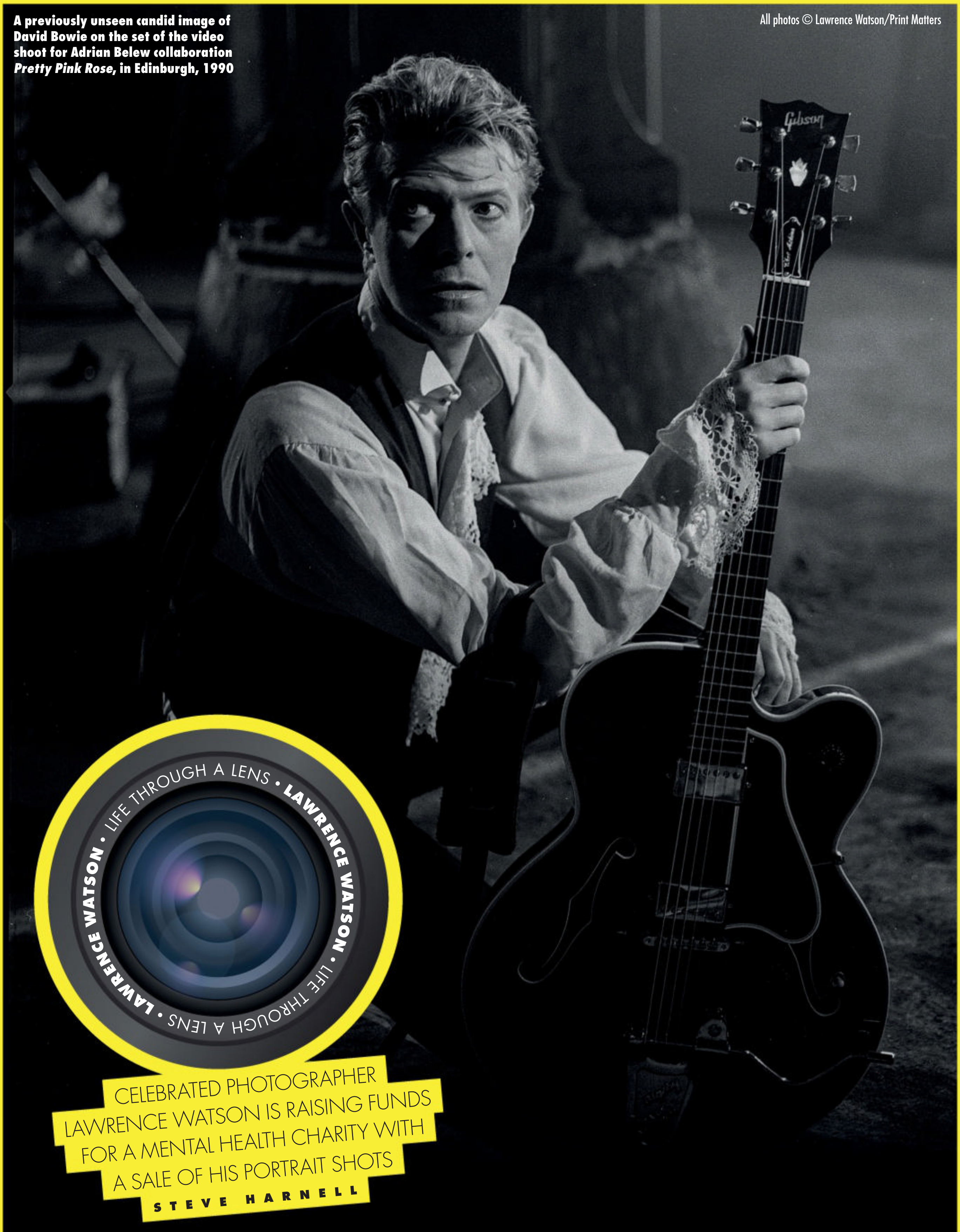
The Nutty Boys revamped Prince Buster's 1964 instrumental B-side with Chas Smash's iconic "Hey you, don't watch that, watch this!" opening salvo. The title track from their debut long-player, produced by Clive Langer and Alan Winstanley, it peaked at No.7, while the album hit No.2. To this day, it still opens the band's sets. "We've tried other songs but that's the one we always come back to," Suggs told *The Daily Mirror* in 2009. "[Chas'] introduction is a clarion call."

NO MORE TEARS (ENOUGH IS ENOUGH)
DONNA SUMMER AND BARBRA STREISAND
(CASABLANCA)

Broadway belter Barbra Streisand and disco diva Donna Summer buddied up for this epic breakup anthem that screamed empowerment. With Giorgio Moroder and Gary Klein producing for Streisand's *Wet* LP and Summer's *On The Radio* comp, sessions were so intense that the latter reportedly passed out in the studio trying to keep up with Babs. Co-writer of the track, Paul Jabara, later recalled to *Us*: "They're both belting, sparking each other. It was a songwriter's dream. Seeing them on their stools opposite each other was so mind boggling [that] my head nearly turned 360 degrees, like Linda Blair's did in *The Exorcist*."

KNOCKED IT OFF
B.A. ROBERTSON
(ASYLUM)

B.A. Robertson's name seemed to be everywhere in the late 70s and early 80s. The Scottish singer-songwriter had already enjoyed a No.2 hit with *Bang Bang* earlier in 1979 and would soon become TV's go-to theme-merchant, credited on shows such as *The Multi-Coloured Swap Shop*. He also co-penned *Carrie* and *Wired For Sound* for Cliff Richard and wrote Brown Sauce's hit, *I Wanna Be A Winner* in '82. This one's waggish lyrics ("Some of us have talent, some of us just haven't/ Some are super sensitive like Mr Spock/ Chose my vocation, took a little application/ I'm an overnight sensation, The King of rock") edge it into novelty territory, but you can't deny Robertson's gift for an earworm melody.



A previously unseen candid image of David Bowie on the set of the video shoot for Adrian Belew collaboration *Pretty Pink Rose*, in Edinburgh, 1990

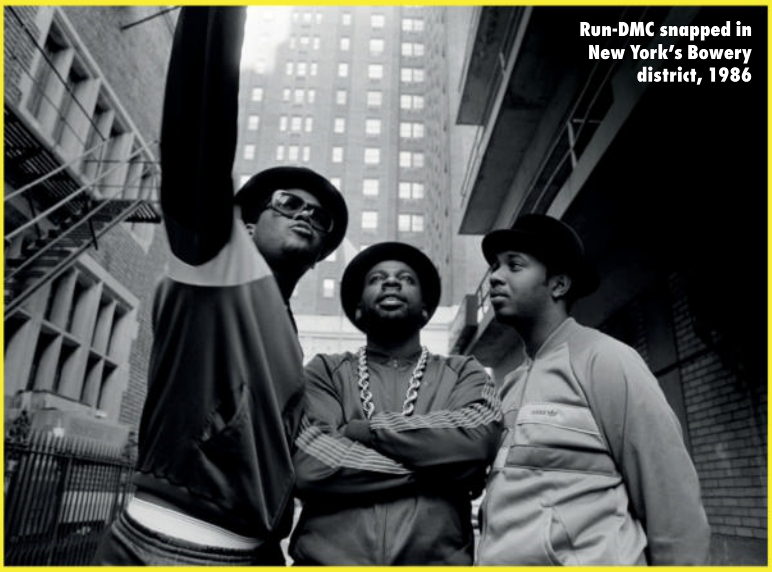
All photos © Lawrence Watson/Print Matters

CELEBRATED PHOTOGRAPHER LAWRENCE WATSON IS RAISING FUNDS FOR A MENTAL HEALTH CHARITY WITH A SALE OF HIS PORTRAIT SHOTS

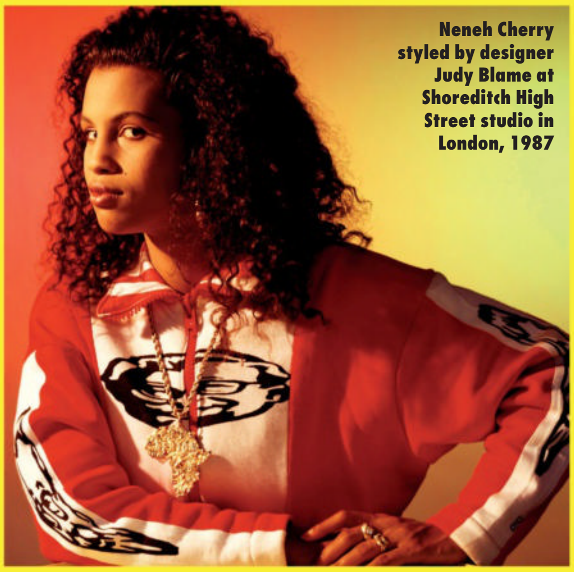
STEVE HARNELL

Acclaimed photographer Lawrence Watson has launched a new online photography platform, Print Matters, with a portion of the proceeds from sales going to the mental health charity Rethink Mental Illness.

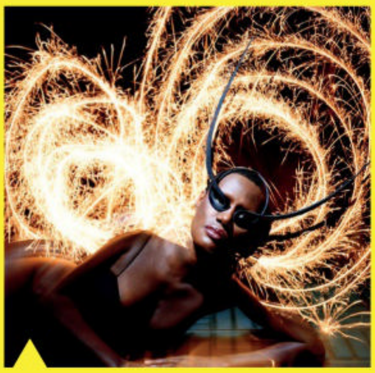
The exclusive collection of signed, limited edition, photographic exhibition prints for Print Matters includes unseen images of the likes of David Bowie, Oasis, Neneh Cherry, The Clash, Paul Weller and many more. Twenty per cent of every sale will be donated to the mental health charity. Visit the collection's website at printmatters.uk.



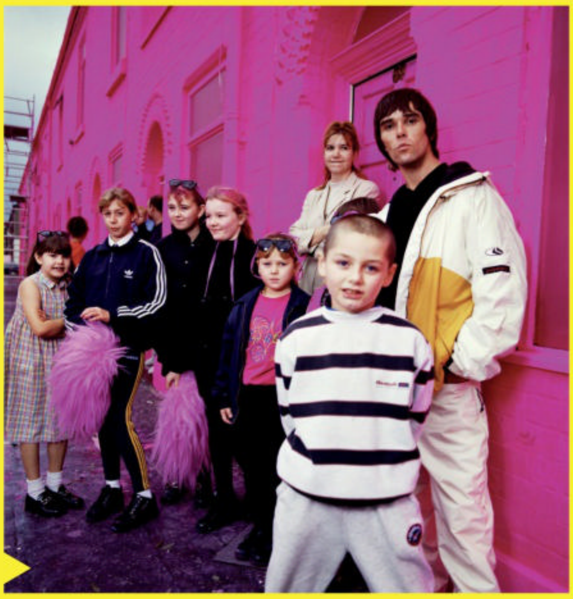
Run-DMC snapped in New York's Bowery district, 1986



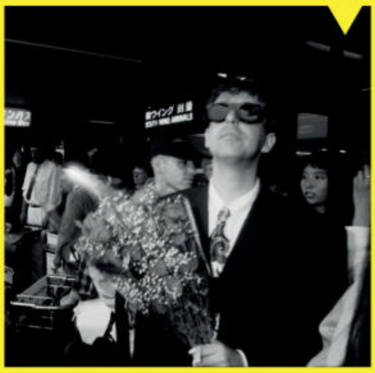
Neneh Cherry styled by designer Judy Blame at Shoreditch High Street studio in London, 1987



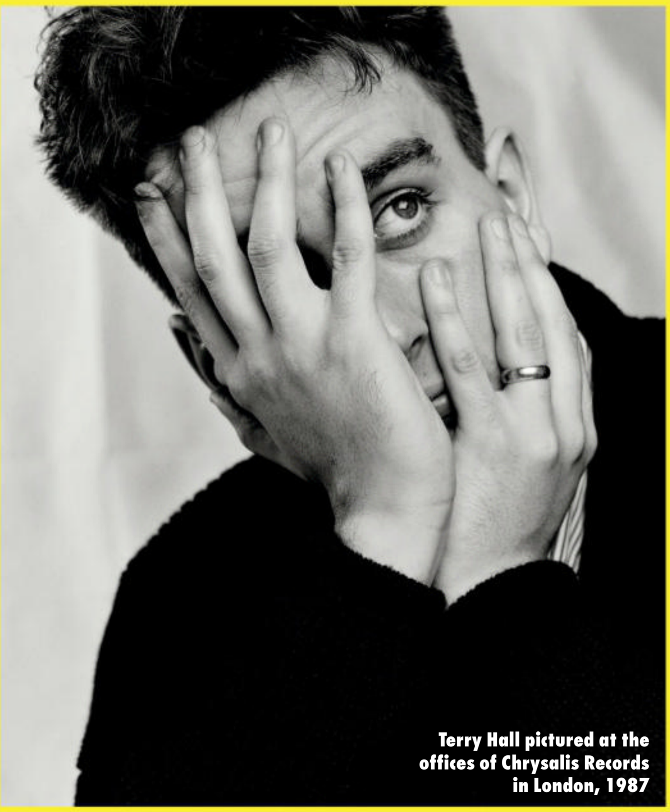
Adding sparklers to the mighty Grace Jones at The George Tavern, Commercial Road, London, 2008



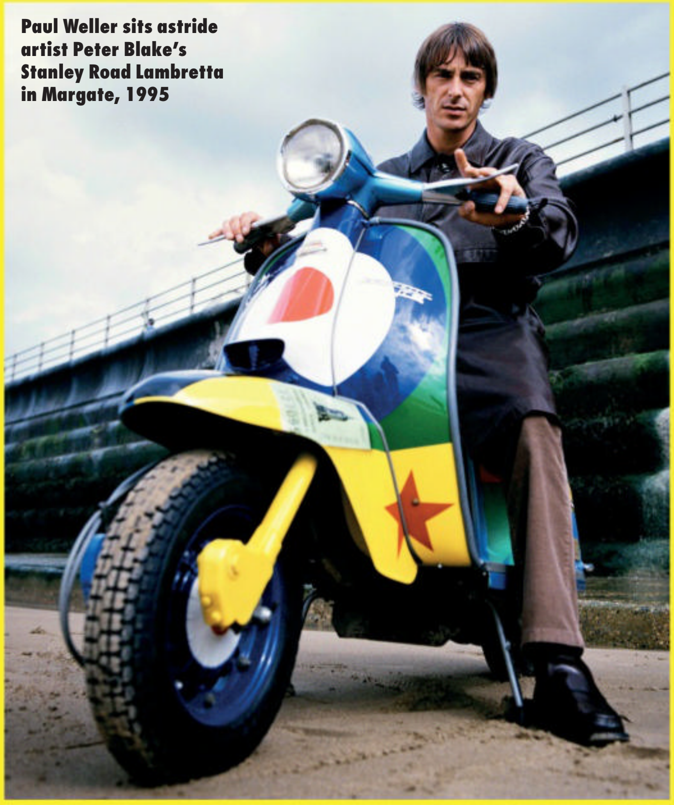
Ian Brown photographed on Salford Street, Manchester, for *Rockin' On* magazine



Lawrence's shot of the Pet Shop Boys at Narita International Airport in Japan was used for the front cover of their single, *Where The Streets Have No Name*



Terry Hall pictured at the offices of Chrysalis Records in London, 1987



Paul Weller sits astride artist Peter Blake's Stanley Road Lambretta in Margate, 1995

Prince performs in the video for *Raspberry Beret*, released as *Around The World In A Day*'s lead single almost a month after the album had landed

© The Prince Estate/Credit: Jeff Katz

AFTER *PURPLE RAIN*, PRINCE INVITED US ON A MAGICAL MYSTERY TOUR WITH HIS SEVENTH STUDIO ALBUM, *AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY*. FORTY YEARS ON, IT'S STILL A WILD, PSYCHEDELIC RIDE…

JORDAN BASSETT

WORLD PARTY

In April 1985, when Prince released his seventh album, *Around The World In A Day*, his star was already riding high. The rock-oriented *Purple Rain* – for many still his crowning artistic achievement – had been out for 10 months and was still very much in the zeitgeist (thanks, in part, to the blockbuster movie of the same name for which it provided the stellar soundtrack). Certainly, that record remains Prince's most commercially successful and one of the highest-selling albums of all time.

Most artists would bask in the glory of their magnum opus and newfound superstardom – but Prince, of course, was not most artists.

Instead, that February, he had made the shocking announcement that he would scrap the mooted European leg of his mammoth Purple Rain Tour to focus on the release of a brand new album. "It was unprecedented," recalls Laura LiPuma, who designed his record sleeves from the 25 million-seller to 1988's *Lovesexy*. "When you have a hit, you're just gonna run like crazy and you're not gonna stop running. All of a sudden, you have Prince, who says: 'Guess what, guys? I'm bored! I'm done with *Purple Rain* – here's the new album."

Flabbergasted Warner Bros. execs couldn't reasonably put up a fight, given that the new album from Prince And The Revolution was already completed and the artwork underway. Still, you can imagine their consternation upon hearing *Around The World...*, which is now celebrating its 40th anniversary with a comprehensive new reissue (featuring B-sides, alternate versions of *Raspberry Beret, America* and *Girl* that are available on streaming and CD for the first time).

Out went the bombastic rock guitars, atmospheric synths and enormous choruses that had made *Purple Rain* so beloved. For the first release on Prince's own Paisley Park Records, in came a mystical, psychedelic suite of songs epitomised by the meditative, piano-led *Condition Of The Heart*, which sees the singer croon in falsetto: "Every day is a yellow day/ I'm blinded by the daisies in your yard."

Around The World In A Day **was released a mere 15 days after the final date of the Purple Rain Tour**

The dynamic intensity of Jimi Hendrix's licks and Led Zeppelin's hard rock helped inform the album's mystical aesthetic

Bob Cavallo, who was part of the three-person team that managed the unconventional star from 1979 to 1989, summed up the mood when he said, in the 2012 Matt Thorne biography *Prince*: "I thought *Around The World In A Day* was Prince scratching an itch. It was wonderful but it hurt *Purple Rain*. We kinda stepped on *Purple Rain*. It was too soon for the marketplace."

Today, Susan Rogers, the engineer on both LPs who worked with Prince between 1983 and 1987, guffaws at Cavallo's reservations: "[*Purple Rain*] was No.1 on the Billboard charts for 24 weeks! I think it did just fine. That's management's job, to say, 'Strategically we should have done this or that.' Good luck holding back Prince and trying to tell him what he can do with his artistry at that time! This is a young man – 26 years old – who had a hit movie, a hit album and a hugely successful tour. You're gonna tell him, 'Well, here's what you need to do for your career...' How's that gonna go?"

SOLID-GOLD POP

What is perhaps most surprising about *Around The World...*, four decades on from its release, is how accessible much of it sounds. This is at odds with contemporary reviews, whose writers seemed unsure what to make of its psychedelic style. "He indulges in much pseudo-philosophical rambling," complained *The Times*, while the *NME* concluded that it "sounds a bit rushed".

Actually, amid all the mysticism, the record offers up solid-gold pop nuggets such as the taut *Pop Life*, the languid *Paisley Park* and aforementioned *Raspberry Beret*, now one of Prince's most streamed songs on Spotify. He was cooking with so much gas that even the *Around The World...* B-sides – such as the swooning *She's Always In My Hair* – are red-hot, though Susan Rogers and Revolution bassist Mark Brown have suggested that his much-mythologised vault contains little unreleased material from this era besides unfinished Revolution jams.

The album is, then, ripe for reassessment. First, it shows that even when he wasn't actively pursuing hits, Prince couldn't help but write indelible melodies. Second, it hints at how relentlessly driven he was to create music, since he began work on most of its tracks shortly before *Purple Rain* was released. As Laura LiPuma reveals: "He was so non-stop creative that he could barely sleep at night."

Around The World In A Day was largely recorded between LA's Sunset Sounds studio and Prince's Flying Cloud Drive Warehouse home studio in Minnesota. The album took shape around its title track, originally a demo written and recorded by Revolution member Lisa Coleman's brother, David, to whom Prince had gifted two days at Sunset Sound as a birthday present. When Lisa handed the tape to the Purple One, she told Matt Thorne, "His mind went, 'Whoosh! This is the album.'"

Prince was then dating Susannah Melvoin, a vocalist in The Family, the funk collective he put together in 1984, and she introduced him to Led Zeppelin's *Stairway To Heaven,* which helped to inspire the mystical aesthetic of *Around The World In A Day.* Initially he deplored the Zep, though later came around. In September 1985, Prince told *Rolling Stone* that he liked 70s psychedelia "because that was the only period in recent history that delivered songs and colours. Led Zeppelin, for example, would make you feel differently on each song."

Susan Rogers adds that "he may have even been, if I have my chronology right, listening to The Beatles a little bit more than he normally did." She also picks out the notable influence of Jimi Hendrix, which is evident in the fuzzy guitar licks that adorn the likes of *Temptation* and *America.*

True to his uncommercial approach, the LP had minimal promotion – there was no tour – and trailed by no singles, though Prince did permit Warner Bros. to release four afterwards (starting with *Raspberry Beret).* The last of these, *America,* all noodling keys and a rubbery bassline that leads to a fist-pumping chorus, was released in two forms. There was the three-and-a-half-minute

PARK LIFE – A STATE OF MIND

Paisley Park, Prince's famous headquarters in Chanhassen, Minnesota, didn't officially open its doors until September 1987 – more than two years after the release of *Around The World In A Day*, which featured the poppy track named after the place.

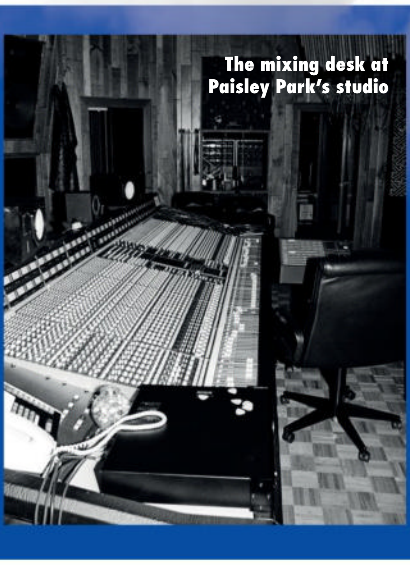
In fact, work didn't even begin on the building until January 1986, by which time the LP was almost a year old.

Time is fluid on said record – *Raspberry Beret* dates back to 1982, though Susan Rogers has said she recalls Prince writing its lyrics during the *Around The World...* sessions at Flying Cloud. To add to the confusion, Flying Cloud Warehouse is referred to as "Paisley Park" in the album's credits, suggesting that it's as much a state of mind as it is a physical place.

That reading is certainly supported by the lyrics, which find Prince eulogising the gaff as a utopia that offers "profound inner peace", adding: "Admission is easy, just say you believe/ And come to this place in your heart."

This manifestation of Paisley Park was part of the star's realisation he had millions of fans looking to him for guidance, says Susan Rogers: "He began envisioning a place for this 'us'... A place where he can rehearse, have his clothes made, have offices, have studios for other like-minded artists to record. All of that was in his mind at the time we did *Paisley Park*."

Prince could create anywhere – some of *Around The World...* was recorded in a mobile unit – but nowhere suited him quite like that place in his heart.



The mixing desk at Paisley Park's studio

Around The World In A Day was Prince's seventh studio album and his third with The Revolution

> "Good luck holding back Prince and trying to tell him what he can do with his artistry at that time!"
>
> SUSAN ROGERS

version, which had appeared on the album, and an almost 22-minute cut released as a 12" (it's this version that was remastered and uploaded to streaming services in July).

That sprawling track – which features wild solos and funky freakouts absent from the shorter edit – was the result of a five-hour jam, the likes of which were not uncommon at Flying Cloud. Fabulously, Lisa Coleman told Thorne of these sessions: "It was an exercise – band yoga, relay racing." Due to recording limitations in the mid-80s, it was impossible to record these sessions in their entirety, though Rogers recalls that Prince "always had a video camera running at rehearsal".

For all the apparently low-key nature of the album, there was old-school opulence aplenty. Prince commissioned Doug Henders, who worked as stage designer on the epic Purple Rain Tour, to create a bespoke painting for the cover. Naturally, he was not vague in his instructions and provided Henders with a page-and-a-half of notes written on the back of a tour itinerary. This 15-point document listed the figures required to appear on the artwork. Point one read: "Olive skinned people wearing hoods & capes of purple. Some could be white (the capes)."

Henders took Polaroids of members of The Revolution and their pals, which he used as the basis for said characters. He then spent two months working on the painting in hotel rooms during the Purple Rain Tour. The result, which vividly depicts the figures lounging on speckled concrete with a swirling psychedelic landscape in the background, is both striking and mysterious.

Prince requested that there be no text on the artwork. "That's when things started to get very challenging," recalls LiPuma, "because that's a marketing nightmare. The solution was to create a small flap, continuing the image and bearing the song titles, that wrapped around the back cover, plus a sticker of a boy holding a balloon (the image was Prince's idea) containing the title, which was affixed to the album's shrink-wrap.

The cover, adds LiPuma, "was such a left turn. It was psychedelic but, at the same time, with a folk twist. It was such a unique style. Prince never wanted it to be derivative; he never wanted it to be like, 'Oh, this is my *Sgt. Pepper's*.... It was not anything like his visual sensibility. I was totally surprised by it."

EVERYONE'S INVITED

Musically, *Around The World...* seems to be preoccupied with the notion of finding a route to inner peace. On the title track, Prince implores: "Open your heart, open your mind/ A train is leaving all day/ A wonderful trip through our time/ And laughter is all you pay." Soaring ballad *The Ladder* sees him claim that "everybody wants salvation of the soul", while the howling *Temptation* features the bald admission: "Everybody on this Earth has a vice... Baby, I'm guilty in the first degree."

"He was going, lyrically, for a broader statement, a more inclusive lyrical statement," says Susan Rogers. "He was speaking about an 'us'. That's not uncommon when a pop star achieves superstar status." She pauses...

While Prince did not tour the LP, singles *Raspberry Beret* and *Paisley Park* charted in the UK at No.25 and No.18

© The Prince Estate. Credit: Jeff Katz

© Alamy

"I have to say this carefully... there can be a tendency for a messiah complex when you realise you have millions and millions of global fans. You want to write about an 'us' that includes you and your fans as a family."

Purple Rain, Rogers notes, found Prince writing "about himself – as it should be". Where that record documented "a young man's exploration of who he was as an artist", the follow-up "morphed into a description of a young man as someone that people looked to – for better or worse! – for answers about things like how we should be in this world."

You needn't look very far at all to find *Around The World*...'s messianic moments of instruction and admonishment. On *Pop Life,* he sneers, "What you putting in your nose?/ Is that where all your money goes?".

America, meanwhile, sees him pointedly suggest that the "little sister making minimum wage" is relieved she at least resides in the Land Of The Free: "She may not be in the black/ But she happy she ain't in the red".

Ultimately, the fact that he was dealing with the fallout of mega-fame before *Purple Rain* was even released just shows what a visionary Prince was; he seems to have known what was coming and mentally prepared for it.

On *America,* in particular, he appears to grapple with his place in the world. "America," he chants, "God shed his grace on thee/ America, America/ Keep the children free."

Upon announcing the track's new release, Prince's estate quoted him as having described the song as "straightforwardly patriotic". Some fans and critics, though, have wondered if the chorus was laced with sarcasm, given that he spends the verses lamenting poverty and hardship.

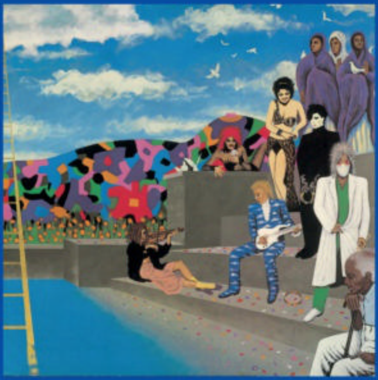
Rogers is unequivocal about her stance on this conundrum, pointing out that Prince "was publicly extravagant but privately he was quite conservative". *America,* she insists, was a song of "gratitude" for the country in which he'd scaled dizzying heights.

"This is a young man," Rogers explains, her voice trembling with passion, "who made his dreams come true by virtue of guts, talent and hard work. He found acceptance among men who were twice his age – men who wore suits, ran record labels and managed big-name artists; men who directed movies and could greenlight a budget of millions of dollars to make a movie. This is a young man from north Minneapolis, on his own, who made it happen before his 25th birthday."

It's to Prince's eternal credit that he reacted to this success by inviting us all on the magical mystery tour he'd found himself spearheading. While *Around The World*... shifted around two million copies, a massive number by today's standards but a drop in the ocean compared to *Purple Rain,* that generosity has proved to be its lasting legacy. ■

"This is a young man who made his dreams come true by virtue of guts, talent and hard work... A young man from north Minneapolis who made it happen before his 25th birthday."

SUSAN ROGERS



CONDITION OF THE ART

There are two things everyone knows about Prince. Yes, he was undeniably funky. And – oh yes – the man was a perfectionist. The superstar pulled epic stints in the studio and would summon photographers to his hotel room in the middle of the night so that he could personally approve shots. He was so involved in all aspects of his work that he even dictated Laura LiPuma's use of fonts on the *Purple Rain* cover, though he gradually ceded more responsibility to her.

Across their five-album collaboration, she says, it "went from Prince being very involved, very controlling... and then, very quickly – because obviously he's a busy man and a genius – he trusted me enough to let go of quite a few things. By the time we got to [1986's] *Parade,* I was able to function as an art director and not just a facilitator."

On *Around The World In A Day,* Prince even let her pick the fonts.

"He was the engineer on a train that was going really fast," recalls Susan Rogers. "All the rest of us were doing was shovelling coal into the furnace."

Although she would start work on *Around The World In A Day* at 10am and often clock off at around 5am the next day, she has no regrets: "In interviews it has been suggested to me – wrongheadedly – that that was abusive. I shut that down like a nuclear power plant. I was working for my favourite artist in the world. I considered myself ridiculously fortunate."

● The 40th anniversary reissue of *Around The World In A Day* is released via NPG Records and Warner Records on 21 November and reviewed on page 90

ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK
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IT BITES

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THOUGH IT WAS TAILOR-MADE FOR THEIR MARKET, AMERICANS NEVER TOOK EVEN A NIBBLE AT IT BITES' HEROIC 1986 DEBUT. HOWEVER, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ATLANTIC A TOP 40 PLACE CONFIRMED AN APPETITE FOR THE QUARTET'S DEFIANTLY UNFASHIONABLE INGREDIENTS.

WYNDHAM WALLACE

As fanfares go, few match the *NME*'s for It Bites' *Calling All The Heroes,* released in the summer of 1986. "I knew it would be a hit," Len Brown trumpeted, summarising the song's appeal. "The perfect ingredients, the right stuff. Metallic slabs of history reprocessed into one heroic self-made man-eating bite-sized chunk... It's typical of It Bites' recipe – classical piano fillers, mock gunfire, snapping drums, Wembley roars, effect pauses, and jet-propelled guitar solos."

Sounds pretty good, you'd think. Indeed, with its arena-sized melody, glistening keyboards, muscular production and compound duple time signature – one for the musos, whom It Bites definitely attracted – the band's second single reached No.6 in the UK chart. But there was, in the tradition of the era's 'build 'em up, knock 'em down' music press, a sting in the journalist's tail. Two paragraphs on, Brown's review of their London Marquee show asserted that they'd united "people who seek no point of view, no point, merely heroes." Damned with faint praise, one might say – band and fans alike.

This wouldn't be the last time. "We were too good for them to understand," original frontman Francis 'Frank' Dunnery insisted to *Prog*'s Dave Ling in 2023. "The so-called music press were so incredibly unmusical that we went over their heads. They all work at Sainsbury's now and at weekends they do write-ups on beans." Taking chunks out of critics was the Dunnery way, and he'd quickly earned a reputation for sniping from the safety of his stage. "I felt insulted by those idiots," he confessed to the same publication and (loyal) writer a year later. "If someone punches me in the face, I'll punch them back."

"WE WERE TOO GOOD FOR THEM TO UNDERSTAND... THE SO-CALLED MUSIC PRESS WERE SO INCREDIBLY UNMUSICAL THAT WE WENT OVER THEIR HEADS."

To many, if not doubters, It Bites' first album, *The Big Lad In The Windmill,* was a welcome smack in the face. Indeed, it was a heavyweight clash of styles, blending, according to Paul Stump's *History Of Progressive Rock,* "satirically clichéd cock-rock posturings... with punkish timbral abrasiveness and a harmonic arsenal." He somehow swerved the word 'prog' itself, but there was plenty in evidence, plus hard rock, soft rock, funk, synth-pop and much more. Overall, it suggested, if It Bites *were* to go down, then they'd go down fighting.

This mindset suited a band whose early, alcohol-fuelled existence had, within a year, led to a ban from local venues. This was a lifestyle Dunnery already knew well. His father was a troubled alcoholic (like his mother) who'd played traditional Scottish music with accordionist Jimmy Shand, and his brother was in 1970s rockers Necromandus, championed by Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi. By 1982, Dunnery, too, was wielding guitar in Waving At Trains, a New Wave/punk band, but with their singer on holiday, he was nabbed by drummer Bob Dalton and bassist Dick Nolan, friends he'd first met aged five at school in Egremont, Cumbria. They became the town's biggest export.

While holding down day jobs they began playing shows most nights a week, swiftly adding their friend John Beck on keyboards. Despite covers of Level 42, Haircut 100 and The Police, their set also revelled in the technical prowess of 70s acts like Weather Report and Genesis. "If one beat was out it was a big argument backstage afterwards," Dunnery remembered in a 1990 interview published by *The Mouth Magazine* in 2013. "Everything had to be tight."

Having briefly tried adding a saxophonist, they abandoned all hope in 1983, with few clubs willing to book them. Dunnery headed to London, but six months later, within days of a chance hometown reunion, Nolan, Dalton and Beck followed him to his Peckham squat. Breaking into an empty council flat next door, they took a second bite at the cherry, writing their own material, day and night, before they'd even begun trying to locate a sofa.

"Frank had a 12-string acoustic guitar with only six strings," their (now defunct) website recounted, "Dick a Yamaha bass and John a Roland TR 606 Drum box, a DX7, and a Yamaha mono synthesizer. For recording, we had a Hitachi stereo cassette recorder and a Panasonic cassette deck which the early demos were recorded on. It was very sophisticated – recording on one cassette player then performing live vocals during playback and recording them on another."

Initially, the results elicited a single response: Paul Morley, who'd just co-founded ZTT, advised them to improve their recordings. So they cashed in their giros, headed to a Camberwell studio, then attempted to deliver their music to A&Rs in person. It was while subsequently scuffling with Warner Bros' security that they were spotted by Martyn Mayhead. He grabbed a tape, then quickly began managing them, funding rehearsals until they snagged a deal. By now they considered themselves a rock band, but perhaps hoping they'd catch the same wave as Marillion, Virgin rapidly restyled them as pop stars.

Things didn't start out well. The *NME* described a Go West opening slot performance as "a cavalcade of slightly nauseous melodies carried by a vigorously effervescent singer over a tight featureless sound." Fortunately, Alan Shacklock – later to co-produce Chesney Hawkes' *The One And Only* in much the same vein – would play to their strengths.

These, it turned out, were to throw everything at RAK Studios into the gated mix. *I Got You Eating Out Of My Hand* launched with a Styx-like riff and pounding drums, Dunnery snarling his vocals before a Robert Fripp-influenced instrumental, and *Wanna Shout* added yet more swagger to their stride. *Turn Me Loose,* meanwhile, sounded like Nik Kershaw had taken multiple left turns, and if *Cold, Tired And Hungry* featured Dunnery's "jet-propelled" guitar heroics, it was on the seven-minute *You'll Never Get To Heaven* that he best displayed habits which later saw him perform with Robert Plant and – since this summer – in ASIA Featuring John Payne.

This still left their secret weapon, *All In Red,* an overlooked, crunching, anthemic debut single, and the brassy *Whole New World* (though this, too, fell short of the charts). But there was no escaping that those who'd stumbled upon *...Heroes*' big synths and galloping theatrics were met with drama that was yet more imposing, and even that song had been embellished. Extended from a streamlined four minutes to well over five, it now boasted a piano feature, a Trevor Horn-style instrumental section as well as a false ending or two.

If they divided opinion, their champions were passionate. While *Smash Hits* had grouched that "Nobody could accuse It Bites of having pretty faces", by Christmas only The Housemartins could beat them to 'Most Promising New Act' status. Typically, Dunnery's response was brusque. "We didn't expect it. We're not very popular."

But they were more popular than he understood. On the eve of their third album, three years after *The Big Lad...*, even the music press was forced to concede the band's substance. "To dismiss the IBs so bluntly overlooks the finely tuned pop sensibility that lurks beneath all but their most indulgent moments," acknowledged *Sounds*. In return, of course, Dunnery shared his own pithy perspective on their debut album's achievements. "Why," he asked, "can't people just look at it and say, he done well for a 19-year-old?" Being Frank, he had a point. ■

THE AMERICAN DREAM

For Orchestral Manoeuvres In The Dark, recording 1985's *Crush* was an intense, exhausting pressure cooker. But today, frontman Andy McCluskey looks back fondly on the band's newly-expanded American breakthrough album.

ANNIE ZALESKI

During the first half of the 80s, OMD were a regular presence in the upper reaches of the UK charts. *Enola Gay, Souvenir, Joan Of Arc and Maid Of Orleans (The Waltz Joan Of Arc)* made the Top 10, while studio albums such as 1981's *Architecture & Morality* and *Dazzle Ships* two years later landed in the Top 5.

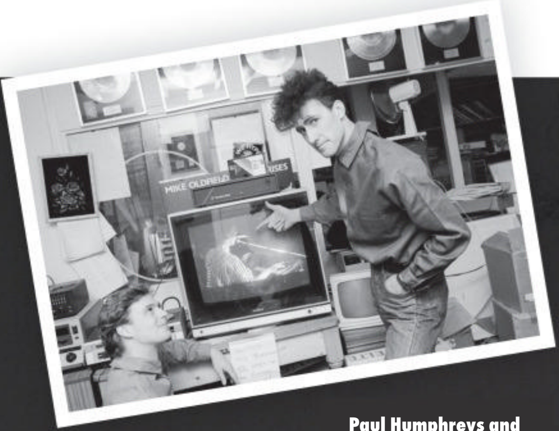
Yet in North America, it was a different story: the Merseyside band – featuring Andy McCluskey and Paul Humphreys – didn't break through until 1985's *Crush*, which is now being reissued as an expanded 40th anniversary deluxe edition.

It wasn't for lack of effort: OMD played several East Coast gigs in 1980, when their debut album was only available as an import, including a memorable show at the New York City club Hurrah.

"We had absolutely no money for hotels," McCluskey recalls. "The promoter did a deal with Hurrah – all the barmaids and their friends just went and looked at the photos of us: 'He can stay at mine.' That's how Paul met his first wife."

The band's UK label, Virgin Records, eventually started licensing OMD's albums (and LPs by labelmates Japan and XTC) to Epic Records in the US. "Epic didn't know what to do with any of us," McCluskey says. "They didn't really want us. Their idea of releasing an album was to hide it under the carpet and see if anybody found it. It was soul-destroying." In the US, OMD were playing small clubs and colleges and had only a minimal radio presence on the few alternative stations around.

To add insult to injury, US pop music was in the throes of a second British Invasion by 1983 – but OMD *still* didn't benefit. "It was frustrating," McCluskey says, "because we kind of felt like the Marines who'd got off the landing crafts on Iwo Jima first and got mown down on the beach – and then Duran Duran and Culture Club walked over our dead bodies to have success in America."



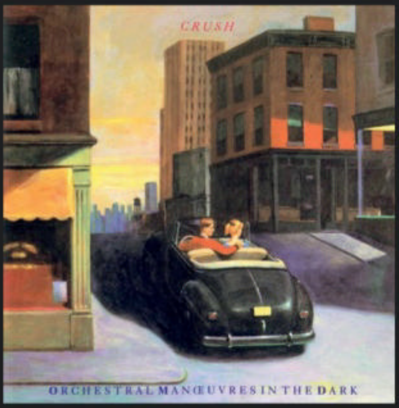
Paul Humphreys and Andy McCluskey celebrate the 40th anniversary of OMD's sixth studio album, *Crush*, with a deluxe reissue

BREAKING THE STATES

The tide started to turn with 1984's *Junk Culture*, which was released on a new US label, A&M Records, that did support OMD. In response, *Locomotion* graced the US dance charts, while the single *Tesla Girls* appeared in the 1985 John Hughes movie *Weird Science*. That was followed by teaming up with a new management firm that had ambitious goals for OMD to build on this momentum – namely, breaking them in America with *Crush*. "We'd long gone past the days when this was just our hobby and everything was a beautiful plus," McCluskey explains. "It was like, 'Okay, Paul's married. We've all bought houses. This is our job. Shit, we better deliver another album.' We were under a huge amount of pressure."

OMD duly booked writing sessions at Amazon Studios in Liverpool. McCluskey dryly notes that the band realised their songwriting only happened in the studio: "You can't strum a synthesizer on the back of a tour bus." Yet working at Amazon brought its own challenges. "We were booking out Amazon at full price for weeks at a time, months at a time," he recalls. "But in the meantime, we were still off doing promotion for other things, tours and stuff. We were paying for days when we weren't even in the studio. Utterly stupid."

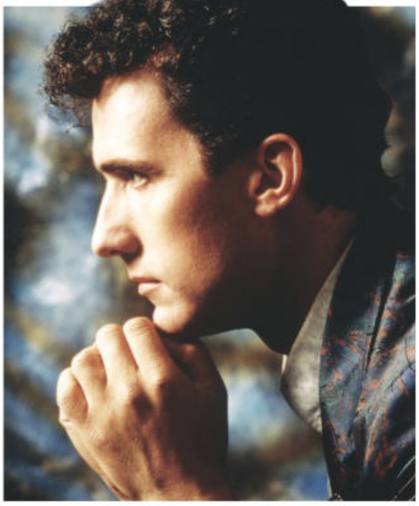
Still, songs started coming together, born out of OMD being "fascinated by America," McCluskey says. This fascination wasn't necessarily positive, he adds with a laugh: "There were some things we adored, and other things we went, 'What the actual heck is going on here? Is this for real?'" – which caused *some* confusion. "I think a lot of our British and European fans thought, 'Oh, conscious sellout.


CRUSH
ORCHESTRAL MANŒUVRES IN THE DARK

→

***Crush*-era OMD – Paul Humphreys and Andy McCluskey, pictured seated, with bandmates Martin Cooper and Malcolm Holmes**

© Paul Cox



Andy McCluskey felt the pressure of constant promotion and touring while making *Crush*

> “It’s been a voyage of rediscovery for us. I’ve fallen back in love with *Crush*. In fact, I’m probably more in love with it now than I was at the time of release.”

You’re singing about America now,’” he says. “But if you listen to the lyrics, they’re not entirely all positive. We were like aliens observing from the outside.”

McCluskey also went into his beloved “geek mode”, as he puts it, the same curiosity-driven, research-heavy mindset that produced historical OMD songs like *Joan Of Arc* and *Enola Gay*. He wrote *88 Seconds In Greensboro* after watching a documentary about a 1979 incident where members of the Ku Klux Klan and the American Nazis murdered five Communists; the defendants were acquitted at civil and criminal trials. “It was a visceral reflection on what I felt watching this documentary, going, ‘Oh my God. How did they get away with that?’”

The Native Daughters Of The Golden West emerged after Andy visited the La Brea Tar Pits in California. “I walked past this little sign that said, ‘Sponsored by the Native Daughters of the Golden West,’” McCluskey says. “I went, ‘Fuck, I’m having that. That’s a song.’” He laughs uproariously. “I researched them as best I could, and came up with this English vision of, ‘Who were the native daughters of the Golden West?’ Were they the pioneer women? Were they the Native Americans? Were they the Black women slaves?”

***Crush*’s reissue boasts seven unreleased tracks, newly mixed by Paul Humphreys**

HONKY-TONK MEN

One of the last songs OMD came up with was *So In Love*, which almost didn’t make *Crush*. “Initially we had a problem with it, because we’re like, ‘It’s really weird doing a kind of eights on the piano,’” he says, and sings the song’s opening chords. “We’d never done that before. It’s just like, ‘Can we do that? Is that a bit honky-tonk? Is that a bit Elton John?’” Figuring out where the kick drum should land was another challenge: “We went for the swing. In the end, I think we did the right thing.”

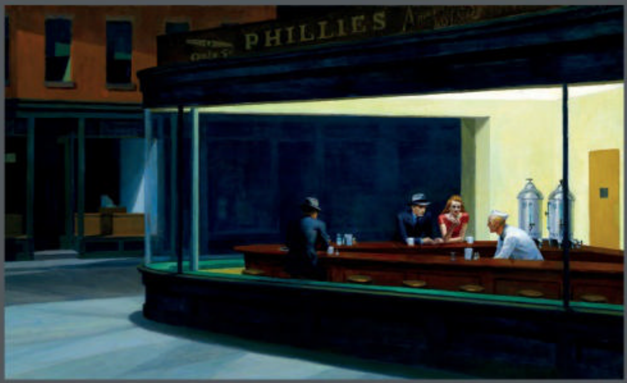
OMD left Amazon with a stash of multitrack demos, for songs that ended up on *Crush* and plenty of additional “experiments,” as McCluskey puts it.

Seven of these unreleased tunes appear on the expanded version of *Crush* mixed by Humphreys. *Choral* stands out with its solemn choir and classical music patina. “I hadn’t heard it for more than 30 years, and I listened and went, ‘Oh, we were so close. It’s so *nearly* amazing,’” Andy adds. “It was like we had the body of the car, but all the parts were in the wrong place, and we couldn’t get the bodywork over the top to make it look like a car.”

The dreamy *Wheels Of Steel* was another near miss, with a chorus McCluskey liked but an arrangement that didn’t gel. “What bugged me about that was I felt that the join between the verse and the chorus, it was like two different songs welded together.”

Especially fascinating are two different versions of an earworm called *Lana Turner* that Murray Head cut on select pressings of his 1987 album *Sooner Or Later*. McCluskey was directly inspired by a separate tune called *Lana Turner* by 70s British band Burlesque, whom he saw as a teenager. “I vaguely remembered it, and was trying to sort of rework it in my head,” he says. “I gave [the original songwriters from Burlesque] a huge slice of the publishing because I felt guilty that I basically lifted

STREET SPIRIT



Had Andy McCluskey not gone into music, he was set to be a visual artist. "I had a place at Leeds Polytechnic to do fine art specialising in sculpture and installations and conceptual art," he says. "I took a gap year, and that's when OMD started." (Incidentally, had McCluskey gone to Leeds, his coursemates would have been Scritti Politti's Green Gartside, and Dave Ball and Marc Almond of Soft Cell.)

Accordingly, McCluskey is a fan of the 20th century artist Edward Hopper, who was known for evocative paintings. *Crush*, the first album sleeve that OMD did without graphic designer Peter Saville, is a nod to Hopper's 1942 oil painting *Nighthawks*, which depicts a well-lit diner at night from outside on the street. "Hold [*Crush*] up next to an image of *Nighthawks*," he says. "If you panned left on *Nighthawks*, that's the other side of the road."

This isn't the only reference to Hopper on *Crush*. The lead singer says on the lyrics of *Bloc Bloc Bloc*, *Women III* and *The Native Daughters Of The Golden West* he's "reflecting the melancholy of American society"; *Women III* especially is a "modern take on a Hopper painting. It's like, loneliness in a crowd, loneliness in plain sight. It's one person in a room that they can see out and everybody can see in, but they are completely wrapped in their own thoughts." For good measure, McCluskey later referenced a number of Hopper paintings in *Night Café* from 2013's *English Electric*: "I was deep in geek mode then."

their idea. Which is probably one of the reasons why it didn't make it on the record, because I was still feeling guilty."

As OMD moved into The Manor Studio in Oxfordshire to record, their management firm suggested working with an American producer so their music would sound better on US radio stations. Stephen Hague got the job. Looking back, the usually expansive McCluskey doesn't have much to say about the collaboration. "Because we were on a tight timescale with the *Crush* album, it was difficult, but he wasn't able to get into a completely stoned noodle," he says.

"We just had to crack on and get on with it. The difficulty came when we worked with him on the next album, *The Pacific Age*. That record has unfortunately tainted our memory of working with him, because it was painful."

MIXED EMOTIONS

McCluskey's stronger memory of this time is just how much pressure OMD was under to finish *Crush*. However, contrary to internet rumours, McCluskey says Humphreys never left the band during this intense time period. The last week mixing the album at Advision Studios in London was particularly brutal, full of nigh-on 20-hour days agonising over tiny sonic details with barely any time to second guess changes *or* have perspective on the music. "It would be like three in the morning: 'Let's leave [a song] on the board. We'll come back in the morning, but we'll only have half an hour to change anything we don't like,'" he recalls. "And in the morning you're tired, you don't want to listen to anything, your head is full of it from the night before. You're still not objective: 'Turn the snare drum down a bit? Is the vocal too quiet? I don't know.'"

But after all this agonising, *Crush* made No.38 on the US Billboard chart – OMD's highest placed album to date. *So In Love* became the band's first major hit single, peaking at No.26. So what did having success in the US change for OMD? "It changes some things, and it doesn't change others," McCluskey explains. "It didn't change the fact we still weren't earning any money when we toured, but it did mean that we could lose money in bigger venues." They opened for The Power Station's debut US tour ("We managed to convert some of the Duranies who'd come to scream at John Taylor and gone, 'Oh, wow, [OMD are] quite good, actually'") and warmed up arenas for the Thompson Twins.

OMD followed up *So In Love* with another strong single, *Secret*, which reached the Top 40 of the US adult contemporary chart and No.63 on the Billboard Hot 100 in early February 1986. However, Paramount Pictures released *If You Leave* as the lead single from the soundtrack to 1986 film *Pretty In Pink*, instead of a rerelease of The Psychedelic Furs' titular song.

OMD were in the odd position of competing with themselves. "We had the difficult decision of saying, 'Okay, well, with Paramount Pictures behind us, and the movie coming out, we're going to have to pull *Secret* off the radio, not actually release it and get *If You Leave* out there,'" McCluskey says. "So everybody heard *Secret* for ages – it's a radio hit – but you couldn't actually buy it."

If You Leave reached the US Top 5 and "changed everything" for OMD, McCluskey says. "The downside is that for a very, very long time – and still to most Americans – we're a one-hit wonder." But the success of *If You Leave* led to 1988's *The Best Of OMD*, which caught Americans up with what they had missed from the band's back pages. "And we can now go to America, close the show with *Enola Gay*, then close the encores with *Electricity*," McCluskey says.

The band did just that on a well-received spring and summer North American tour this year. McCluskey says OMD plans to be at European festivals next summer, "and then I think 2027 is going to be quiet, because 2028" – here he pauses and makes a dramatic *duh duh duh* sound – "is the 50th anniversary tour. I cannot believe it's going to be 50 years."

At the moment, though, he's delighted with the *Crush* reissue, as his feelings towards the album have changed – entirely for the better. "It's been a voyage of rediscovery for us," he says. "I've fallen back in love with it. In fact, probably more in love with it than I was at the time of release.

"We closed the door and walked away from it and went, 'Well, we didn't have time to mix it properly. We didn't have time to write it. So God knows what it really sounds like,'" he adds and then lets out a hearty laugh. "Then I listened to it again and it was like, 'Goddamn you 26-year-old geniuses. How did you do that?'"

- **The 40th anniversary reissue of *Crush* is released on 10 October via UMR/Virgin and reviewed on page 90**

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TOP 20 NORTH AMERICAN SYNTH-POP TRACKS

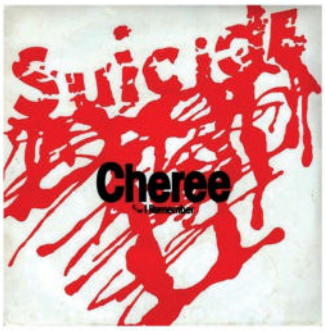
UK artists may have broken synth-pop into the mainstream, but their North American contemporaries weren't too far behind, re-sequencing it through a Stateside filter into something just as groundbreaking

DAVE FREAK

The accessibility, affordability and portability of synthesizers in the late 70s had a profound effect on popular music, particularly in the UK, where the likes of Ultravox!, Gary Numan and OMD reshaped punk's 'anything goes' aesthetic to lay the foundations of synth-pop.

The strange sounds produced by those pioneers were felt the world over, but particularly in North America, where countless creatives embraced clunky keyboards, rhythm boxes, sequencers and rudimentary sampling techniques to fashion their own take on machine-led popular music. And it sounded very different from what was coming out of the UK, shaped by the spiky immediacy of US New Wave, the energy and thrust of New York's gay discos, and even that uniquely Stateside format, FM rock radio.

The result is a suitably broad and quintessentially North American take on the genre, where twee tunes and atmospheric ballads sit side-by-side with art school experimentalism and the occasional burst of guitar shredding.



20

SUICIDE

CHEREE (1978)

With their minimalist buzzing electronics, rhythm box and reverb-heavy vocals, arty proto-punks Martin Rev and Alan Vega consistently struggled to find a wider audience despite such celebrity fans as Soft Cell, The Jesus And Mary Chain and Bruce Springsteen (who covered *Dream Baby Dream*). Lifted from their eponymous 1977 debut, and built around a familiar sounding rock'n'roll chord progression, *Cheree* is rough, fuzzy, stark, fragile, weird and Suicide at their most accessible.

UNITS
San Francisco, CA

19

THE UNITS

HIGH PRESSURE DAYS (1979/1980)

Emerging from San Francisco's underground scene, The Units were just as comfortable playing with punk stalwarts like Iggy Pop and the Dead Kennedys as they were opening for Gary Numan or OMD. *High Pressure Days* first appeared in 1979 and was smoothed out for a 1980 remake, when the track led the way on debut album *Digital Stimulation*. Tracks like *The Right Man* were more obviously pop, but they split in 1984 after a second LP failed to materialise.

MINISTRY
REVENGE

18

MINISTRY

REVENGE (YOU DID IT AGAIN) (1983)

Although Al Jourgensen would go on to make his name as a key figure in the development of the industrial genre, the roots of Chicago's Ministry actually lay in synth-pop. Signed to major label Arista, early single *Revenge* is a surprisingly buoyant and catchy number from their *With Sympathy* debut album. Unhappy with the experience, Al would quickly disavow the record. However, recent LP *The Squirrely Years Revisited* boasts more aggressive re-recordings from the era.

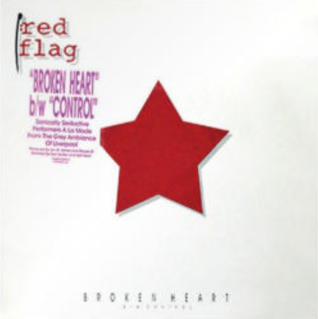
BERLIN
metro
BERLIN
THE METRO

17

BERLIN

THE METRO (1981/1983)

Five years before they were taking your breath away (and topping the charts worldwide) with their *Top Gun* theme, the Los Angeles synth-pop act were busy embracing a European exotica reminiscent of Midge Ure-era Ultravox. *The Metro* was first released in 1981 to little acclaim, but a tweaked version later earned actress/singer Terri Nunn and her co-travellers MTV airplay, and their then-highest US chart placement after being included on their breakthrough second album, 1982's *Pleasure Victim*.



16

RED FLAG

BROKEN HEART (1988)

Brothers Mark and Chris Reynolds hailed from Liverpool, but the family moved frequently before eventually settling in 1970s San Diego. It was here that the siblings formed Red Flag. Like much of their early output, the breezy *Broken Heart* is somewhat indebted to the percussive rhythms and vocal inflections of Depeche Mode. The next single, *Russian Radio* – also from their *Naïve Art* LP – is just as strong, yet they never quite cracked it. Mark died in 2003, but Chris has kept the flag flying.

GREY FACTOR
WHEN THE FUTURE ARRIVES WITHOUT YOU

15

GREY FACTOR

YOU'RE SO COOL (1979)

Los Angeles' Grey Factor are one of the great lost bands of US electronic music. Recently rediscovered after 40 years in the void, remasters of forgotten recordings have been selling out as fast as labels can press them, leading to this month's complete works double-CD, *When The Future Arrives Without You*. It's raw, but the beefy electronic pulses and metronomic beat of *You're So Cool*, from their debut cassette EP *The Perils Of Popularity*, echo with the sound of the future. A remarkable find.

SATURN
Saturn
THE EXOTIC BIRDS

14

EXOTIC BIRDS

NO COMMUNICATION (1983)

Taken from their self-titled first album, Exotic Bird's keyboard-embellished New Wave track has all the vim of A Flock of Seagulls. Formed by three percussion students, the Cleveland combo opened for Information Society, Culture Club and Eurythmics. Though *No Communication* was picked up by MTV, Exotic Birds never broke nationally and are perhaps best remembered today for the fact that Trent Reznor briefly passed through their ranks en route to Nine Inch Nails.

Anything Box
Living In Oblivion
Epic

13

ANYTHING BOX

LIVING IN OBLIVION (1988/1990)

Initially self-released in 1988, *Living In Oblivion* became the New Jersey band's major label debut two years later when it heralded the release of their first album, *Peace*. A-Box's knack for simple hooks and soaring vocal lines saw the band likened to Erasure, and the happy/sad *Oblivion* reached the Top 10 of Billboard's Dance Club charts. Still active, recent collections, such as *Otherverses*, have a light Depeche Mode airiness which they refer to as 'End Pop'.

I Beg Your Pardon.
KK
KON KAN

12

KON KAN

I BEG YOUR PARDON (1988)

A Top 5 success in 1989, the Canadian's only UK hit is a bizarre stew of New Order, M/A/R/R/S, S'Express and country and western – with the borrowing of Lynn Anderson's hit *(I Never Promised You A) Rose Garden* inspired by Pet Shop Boys' *Always On My Mind* cover. Winner of the 1990 Juno for Best Dance Record, creator Barry Harris has updated the track several times since, including a 1994 House version and 2014 remix from EDM DJ Edson Pride.

THE FLIRTS... THE FLIRTS...
THE FLIRTS... THE FLIRTS...
Passion

11

THE FLIRTS

PASSION (1982)

The Flirts were essentially a vehicle for Bobby Orlando, with the producer employing a rotating cast of singers and models to front the act. The trio's early output included the proto-New Wave *Jukebox* and a twisted version of *I Only Want To Be With You*, but it's *Passion* that stands out. With its marching beat, breathy vocals and catchy keyboard riff, it's an inventive electronic popper with Hi-NRG overtones. Bobby O went on to work with a pre-fame Pet Shop Boys, overseeing the 1984 version of *West End Girls*.

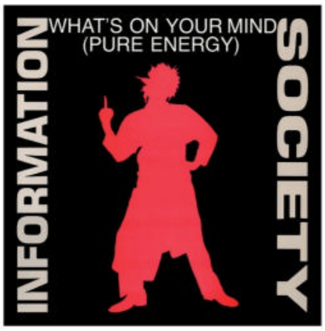
PRETTY BOYS AND PRETTY GIRLS
Book of Love

10

BOOK OF LOVE

PRETTY BOYS AND PRETTY GIRLS (1988)

1985's debut single, *Boy*, put the Philadelphia synth quartet on the map, leading to Depeche Mode taking them on tour. But *PB&PG*, from their second album *Lullaby*, earned the collective a US club hit. One of the first pop songs to address the AIDS epidemic — 'sex is dangerous, I don't take my chances' — an extended 12" version ingeniously weaved in Mike Oldfield's *Tubular Bells*. Book Of Love split up in the early 90s, but there have been sporadic sightings since.



09

INFORMATION SOCIETY

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND (PURE ENERGY) (1988)

The Minnesota band's pop sensibilities were shaped by European electro as much as US hip-hop. Though failing to scrape into the UK Top 75, their second single made an impact in their homeland where they were signed to Tommy Boy. Featuring a sample from *Star Trek*'s Leonard 'Spock' Nimoy, and produced by Fred Maher (Scritti Politti) *What's On Your Mind* remains InSoc's biggest hit by a long shot, and with good reason.

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM
THIS IS HAPPENING

08

LCD SOUNDSYSTEM

DANCE YRSELF CLEAN (2010)

LCD Soundsystem made their name by infusing New York punk-funk with the artful experimentation of Bowie and Suicide. *Dance Yrself Clean* comes from the *This Is Happening* LP and with nearly 139 million streams on Spotify, it's their most popular tune by a mile. It starts tentatively, tempting the listener to toy with their volume control, then with hooks in place rapidly builds into a crashing cacophony of screeching vocals and synthy bleeps. Epic.

FUTURE ISLANDS
SEASONS (WAITING ON YOU)

07

FUTURE ISLANDS

SEASONS (WAITING ON YOU) (2014)

The strident opener from *Singles*, the Baltimore quartet's fourth album, *Seasons* is driven by the rhythm section. But it's frontman Samuel T Herring's emotive performance that really nails it, particularly live, where his angular dance moves and exaggerated vocals only add to the song's yearning qualities. Seasons change... but do people? And if so, what's the cost? A critics fave, *Spin*, *The Guardian* and *NME* went on to declare it the best track of 2014.

Megatron Man
Patrick Cowley

06

PATRICK COWLEY

MEGATRON MAN (1981)

Famed for his collaborations with Sylvester (such as *Do You Wanna Funk*), producer/musician Cowley's own *Megatron Man* infuses Queer Disco with a Moroder-esque European sensibility. It's brief Kraftwerk-like vocoder vocal, sweeping synths, relentless bass and steady beat set the foundations for Hi-NRG. Pet Shop Boys and New Order were among those clearly taking notes as Cowley's innovations fed back into mainstream pop. Sadly, he died in 1982 and never saw the sizeable influence he had.

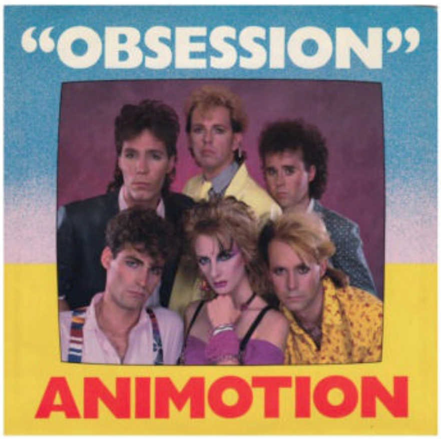
OUR DAUGHTERS WEDDING

05

OUR DAUGHTER'S WEDDING

LAWNCHAIRS (1980)

Hailing from the San Francisco area, *Our Daughter's Wedding*'s debut was first released Stateside in 1980 on their own Design label. Fizzing with an infectious energy akin to OMD's *Electricity*, it was soon picked up by EMI, with a re-recorded version narrowly missing the UK Top 40 in 1981. The trio initially saw themselves as a rock act, namechecking Van Halen and The Cars, but hearing the likes of Numan and Ultravox they traded in their guitars for keyboards.



WHIP IT
DEVO

Sparks.
When I'm
With You.

04

ANIMOTION

OBSESSION (1984)

Originally recorded for the soundtrack of forgotten flop *A Night In Heaven* by writers Holly Knight and Michael Des Barres, it was LA's Animotion who would rescue the track from obscurity a year later. Its big electronic stabs, ghostly lead line and guitar workout is the perfect marriage of synth-pop and melodic rock. Follow-up singles, *I Engineer* (a Bernie Taupin co-write) and *Let Him Go,* were less successful. *Obsession* returned to the big screen last year when Animotion's cut appeared in Ti West's movie, *MaXXXine*.

03

DEVO

WHIP IT (1980)

The band's biggest hit, the cracking *Whip It* transformed the fortunes of the arty Ohio oddballs from firm outsiders to MTV faves. The standout from their make-or-break third album *Freedom Of Choice*, the collection saw the band fully embrace synths and debut their distinctive 'energy dome' pot-like headgear. Although the song is often believed to have sexual connotations, the lyrics are nonsensical, calling for listeners to whip their problems into shape. Co-writer Mark Mothersbaugh went on to compose the theme for the *Rugrats* cartoon.

02

SPARKS

WHEN I'M WITH YOU (1980)

The unexpected teaming with German electronic disco producer Giorgio Moroder flung the sinking Mael brothers back into the spotlight with *No. 1 In Heaven*. In an attempt to repeat the magic, they reunited a year later and, joined by co-producer Harold Faltermeyer, delivered *Terminal Jive*. Though not a UK hit, standout *When I'm With You* boasted squelching synths, skipping beats, electronic brass and a knowing witty Sparksian lyric. A surprise hit in France and Australia, it made a welcome return to their live set in 2023.

01

THE CARS

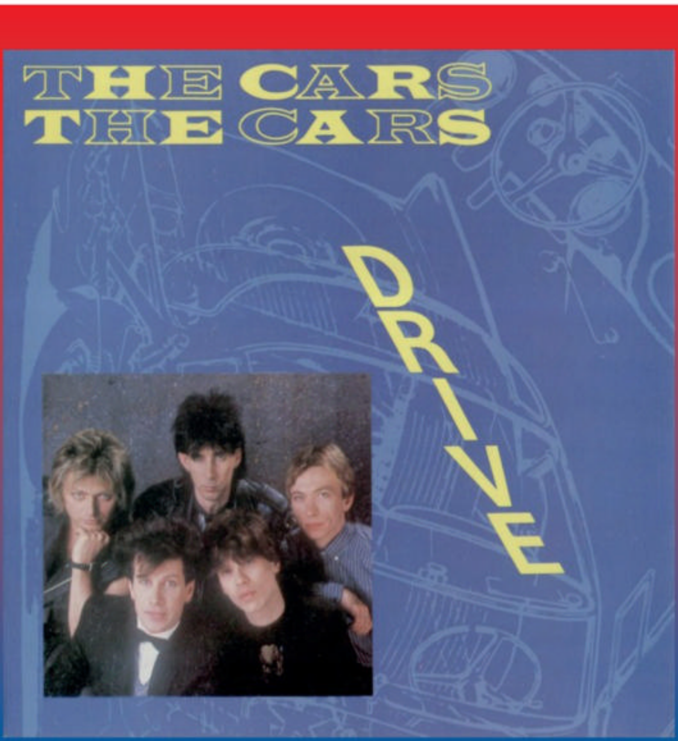
DRIVE (1984)

Boston band The Cars' neat mix of rock, New Wave and power pop earned them an instant UK Top 10 single in 1978 with *My Best Friend's Girl*. Despite several contenders, including 1982's *Since You're Gone*, they'd subsequently managed to avoid the Top 20 for six years... until *Drive*.

The synth-drenched ballad was lifted from their fifth album, *Heartbeat City*. Produced in London by Mutt Lange (then famed for working with AC/DC and Def Leppard), the record yielded a clutch of singles defined by pulsating sequencers, stabbing synths and metronomic sampled rhythms, including the chugging upbeat *You Might Think* and the sweeping title track. But it was the haunting *Drive* that eclipsed everything.

Written by Ric Ocasek and sung by bassist Benjamin Orr, *Drive* poses a series of questions: Who's going to pick you up when you fall? Who's going to pay attention to your dreams? Who's going to drive you home tonight? It's lyrically broad enough to offer multiple interpretations. However, *Drive*'s layered synths and lush sampled voices, coupled with Orr's simple, clear delivery, evoke a rich atmosphere of longing and hope.

Initially peaking at No.5 in 1984, the single gained a new life a year later when it soundtracked a montage of news footage from the African famine pieced together by US broadcaster CBS as a Live Aid insert. Catapulting it back into the UK charts, *Drive* reached No.4. ■



> Drive's layered synths and lush sampled voices, evoke a rich atmosphere of longing and hope

A
POPSCENE
YOUR AT-A-GLANCE GUIDE TO SOME OF OUR FAVOURITE SUB-GENRES

THROBBING BEATS AND A DEADPAN SENSE OF HUMOUR ARE WHAT CHARACTERISED CLUBLAND'S DOMINANT SOUND IN THE EARLY NOUGHTIES...

STEVE O'BRIEN

Electroclash

What is it?

Chances are, if you went clubbing in 2001 and weren't strutting your stuff at the local indie fleapit, that you were sweating it over Peaches' *Fuck The Pain Away* or Fischerspooner's *Emerge*, for it was those brutal sounds that seemed to saturate the club scene at the dawn of the Noughties.

Characterised by crisp drum machine beats, a fat techno throb and inscrutable vocals dripping in irony, it had emerged at the end of the 90s, at once retro and futuristic, the quintessentially postmodern genre for the coming millennium.

Who coined the term 'electroclash' is a subject of fierce debate – some point to Germany's DJ Hell, while others credit LA-based club promoter DJ Larry Tee. Certainly, it was Tee who helped popularise this new underground sound, however, when he curated the first Electroclash Festival in New York in 2001.

Sonically, electroclash relied on vintage synths delivering pulsating rhythms, preferring analogue warmth over digital precision. Certainly, there are synth-pop influences, with more than a hint of Yazoo and Eurythmics in the music's deadpan vocal delivery.

It's seen something of a revival in the past few years, being included in what Gen Z call 'Indie Sleaze' – a freshly-minted term that scoops together the alternative sounds of the 2000s, from garage rock misfits like The Strokes and The Libertines to electroclash doyens such as Fischerspooner, Crystal Castles and Peaches.

For those born in the 21st century, it seems, the genre's trashy, sexed-up glamour, exuberant decadence and, yes, sense of humour, is the much-needed rectifier to today's antiseptic chart pop. Welcome back.

What they say

"What I like about [electroclash] is that it comments on what's going on, it's got a sense of humour, it's trying not to be normal." **NEIL TENNANT, QUOTED IN *THE GUARDIAN***

"A streak of self-awareness was the cheeky grin that linked many of the era's pivotal acts, and you need not read a splashy quote from *The New York Times* to realise that electroclash outfits didn't take themselves too seriously." **SHAUN RONCKEN WRITING FOR *QUIPMAG***

"There's an element of humour and irony to electroclash that I feel made it so popular, because you had grunge in the 90s, and that was so serious." **SYNTH-POP SINGER SOFIIAK, QUOTED IN *WASH MAGAZINE***

Essential Artists

◀ PEACHES
Canadian provocateur Peaches, born Merrill Nisker, exploded onto the scene back in 2000 with the sexually charged, lo-fi long-player *The Teaches Of Peaches*, a record that is now considered one of the genre's set texts, with *The Guardian* ranking it at No.94 in their 100 Best Albums of the 21st Century list in 2019. Always one of electroclash's most confrontational figures, she even won the respect of avant-garde icon Yoko Ono, who, after personally appointing her to perform during the Meltdown Festival at London's Southbank Centre in 2013, stated: "I have a clear vision of future women artists led by the creative courage of Peaches. Thank you for adding a long and exciting life to performance art." (teachesofpeaches.com).

MISS KITTIN ▶
French DJ and vocalist Caroline Hervé, aka Miss Kittin, came to prominence through her buddy-ups with The Hacker (otherwise known as Michel Amato), including the tracks *Frank Sinatra* and *1982*, both of which blended minimalist beats with straight-faced lyrics about nightlife excess. Her evolution into solo projects, such as *BatBox* (2008), kept electroclash's scuzzy, sinful spirit.

◀ FISCHERSPOONER
Fischerspooner, the New York-based duo of Warren Fischer and Casey Spooner, came up in the late 90s as performance artists blending music, theatre and visual spectacle. They gained notoriety through elaborate, Warhol-esque live shows featuring flamboyant costumes, synchronised dancers and multimedia elements, bringing a cutting-edge theatricality to the genre. The pair called it quits in 2019, after the release of their fourth and final LP, the Michael Stipe co-produced *Sir*.

Essential Tracks

FISCHERSPOONER
EMERGE (2001)

With its thrumming bass and robotic vocals, *Emerge* would become one of the genre's defining tracks and also one of its biggest commercial hits, peaking at No.25 in the UK. Raw and minimalist, it's been featured on countless TV shows and films, from *Nip/Tuck* and *Westworld* to *D.E.B.S.*

MISS KITTIN & THE HACKER
FRANK SINATRA (1998)

There was always a strong sense of fun in electroclash and this one's wry lyrics referencing Ol' Blue Eyes ("Every night with my star friends/ We eat caviar and drink Champagne/ Sniffing in the VIP area/ We talk about Frank Sinatra/ 'You know Frank Sinatra?'/ He's dead!"), delivered by Miss Kittin in a stony monotone, are as funny as anything Morrissey ever penned.

PEACHES
FUCK THE PAIN AWAY (2000)

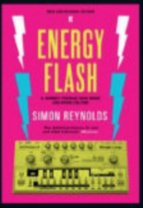
Raw and unapologetic, this raunchy DIY banger pairs sparse electronics with Peaches' ferocious rhymes. It's electroclash at its most punk – explicit, empowering and impossible to ignore. Sampled on the *As Heard On Radio Soulwax Pt. 2* mix compilation and turning up in the movie *Lost In Translation*, it even influenced Radiohead, with Thom Yorke crediting the song as helping inspire 2007's *15 Step*.

TIGA & ZYNTHERIUS
SUNGLASSES AT NIGHT (2001)

TIGA & ZYNTHERIUS
Sunglasses at Night

Though much of the genre was retro in sound, it was unusual for one of its pivotal numbers to be an actual cover of an 80s song, let alone one like Corey Hart's synth-rock banger *Sunglasses At Night*. Mixed by Canadian DJ Tiga and Finnish producer Jori Hulkkonen (as Zyntherius), it reframes the original's lyrics – "I wear my sunglasses at night/ So I can, so I can/ Watch you weave then breathe your storylines" (mimed by transgender performance artist Amanda Lepore in the video) into something more droll.

Further Reading



- *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music And Dance Culture* by Simon Reynolds – Faber & Faber (Originally published in 1998) ■

POPARAZZI

READERS SHARE THEIR FAVOURITE PHOTOS AS THEY GET UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL WITH SOME OF THE BIGGEST NAMES IN PLANET POP

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TONY McCARROLL
WITH JOHN McFADDEN

"I'm pictured here with Oasis' founding drummer for an event at Kinnitty Parish Hall, County Offaly, where he was celebrated with a blue plaque. This was the location where his first-rehearsed pre-Oasis musical journey began. Pictured left is John Clendennen TD, a Deputy to the Dáil in the Irish Government. John co-organised the event with me, securing funding for the plaque. We've both known Tony all our lives."

MIDGE URE WITH DEREK WALLIN

"I met Midge Ure when he played at the Norwich Theatre Royal on 6 October 2019 – it was the first night of this 1980 Tour with Band Electronica. As a huge fan of Ultravox, I was over the moon to meet him. He was so down to earth and chatted for quite a while. I got his autobiography signed to me, which I treasure. I've met quite a few of my heroes but Midge was by far the nicest. I saw Ultravox twice in the 80s and it would be a dream come true for me to see the band back together for one more tour."

JUDIE TZUKE
WITH PERRY TWELVETREES

"I met Judie after her concert at Selby Town Hall on 19 October 2024. I have to confess to being a fan since her first album came out in 1979, the brilliant *Welcome To The Cruise*, so you'll have to forgive me if I sound a little biased when I tell you how absolutely wonderful her performance was. Her voice has lost none of its charm, beauty and intimacy, and the songs from her new album were simply fabulous. And... I got to meet her. What an incredible evening, what an amazing concert, what a lovely lady. I think I'm still buzzing."

TONY HADLEY
WITH NIEVES AMO

"Tony played in my hometown on 9 September 2023 at the Plaza Mayor de Valladolid as part of the Fiestas de Valladolid. The concert was amazing, and even though Tony was on crutches, he took his time to take pictures and sign records to all the fans there."

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SAT 29
MARGATE DREAMLAND

DEC 2025

WED 10
HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
FRI 12
LIVERPOOL O$_2$ ACADEMY
SUN 14
BOURNEMOUTH O$_2$ ACADEMY
TUE 16
OXFORD O$_2$ ACADEMY
WED 17
LONDON
O$_2$ SHEPHERD'S BUSH EMPIRE
FRI 19
NEWCASTLE O$_2$ CITY HALL
SAT 20
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MON 22
MANCHESTER O$_2$ RITZ

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15 **NOTTINGHAM** ROCK CITY
20 **CARDIFF** DEPOT
21 **LIVERPOOL** MOUNTFORD HALL
22 **SHEFFIELD** OCTAGON
26 **CAMBRIDGE** CORN EXCHANGE
27 **LONDON** ROUNDHOUSE
28 **SOUTHEND** CLIFFS PAVILION
29 **NORWICH** THE LCR, UEA

APRIL
02 **BRIGHTON** DOME
03 **BRISTOL** BEACON
04 **BIRMINGHAM** O$_2$ ACADEMY
05 **BOURNEMOUTH** O$_2$ ACADEMY
09 **MARGATE** HALL BY THE SEA
10 **GUILDFORD** G LIVE
11 **MANCHESTER** O$_2$ VICTORIA WAREHOUSE
16 **GLASGOW** BARROWLAND
17 **GLASGOW** BARROWLAND
18 **GLASGOW** BARROWLAND
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MANCHESTER
O$_2$ Ritz

SAT 20
LONDON
O$_2$ Shepherd's
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SAT 11 APR LEICESTER O$_2$ ACADEMY2
SAT 25 APR LIVERPOOL O$_2$ ACADEMY
SAT 09 MAY BIRMINGHAM O$_2$ ACADEMY2
SAT 23 MAY BOURNEMOUTH O$_2$ ACADEMY
SAT 06 JUN OXFORD O$_2$ ACADEMY2
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SAT 13 DEC **LIVERPOOL** O$_2$ ACADEMY

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2026
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SAT 17 JAN **LIVERPOOL** O$_2$ ACADEMY2
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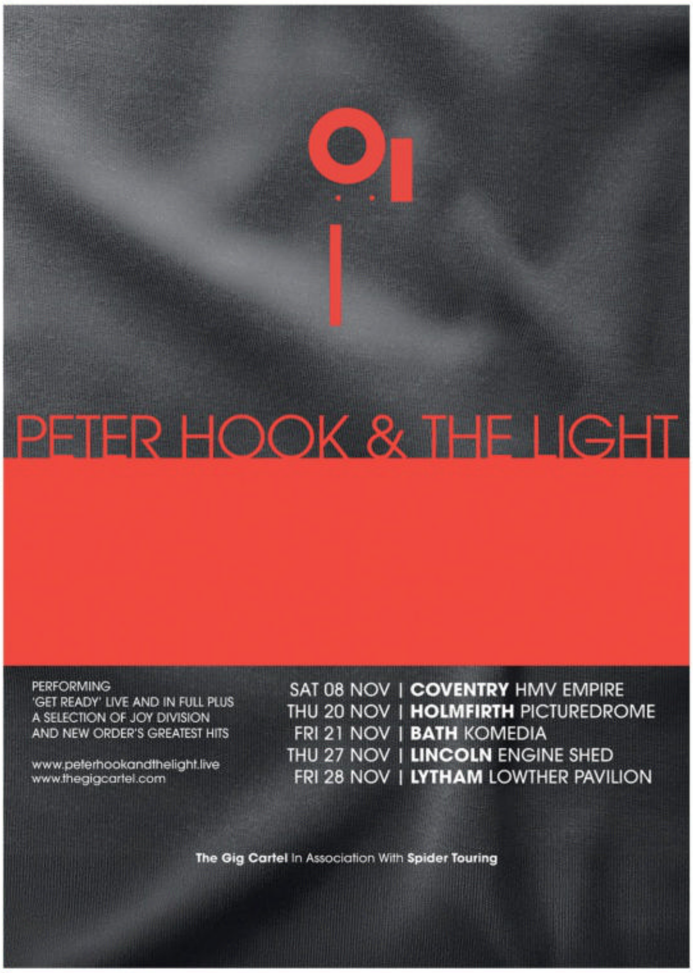

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RATINGS

★★★★★ EXCELLENT
★★★★ VERY GOOD
★★★ GOOD
★★ PATCHY
★ POOR

Kylie Minogue's *Tension Tour Live 25* is reviewed on page 82

THE HOT LIST

NEW RELEASES THAT NEED TO BE ON YOUR CULTURAL RADAR

STEVE HARNELL

© Rob Roth

BLONDIE
NO EXIT

1

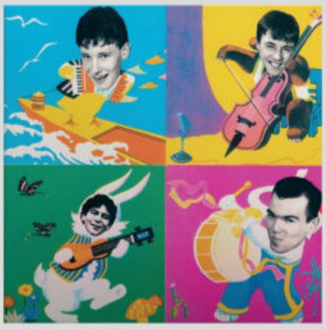
3

❶ NO EXIT

BLONDIE

Blondie's 1999 comeback album is being reissued as a deluxe edition. Released on 31 October via BMG, it's back in three physical formats – a 2CD set, crystal glass clear 2LP incarnation and black 2LP version. All formats include the remastered original LP featuring the UK No.1 single *Maria* alongside remixes, new liner notes as well as *Hot Shot*, a track that was previously released only in Japan.

2



❷ CHICKEN RHYTHMS

NORTHSIDE

First issued on the Factory Records label in June 1991, Northside's only long-player, the Ian Broudie-produced *Chicken Rhythms*, has now been re-cut from the original studio masters with restored artwork from Central Station Design. For the reissue that's out on 14 November via London Records, take your pick from an expanded CD edition, a green vinyl LP or 12" white label featuring remixes by Leo Zero and The Reflex of the singles *Take 5* and *Shall We Take A Trip*.

❸ 1975-1976

SPARKS

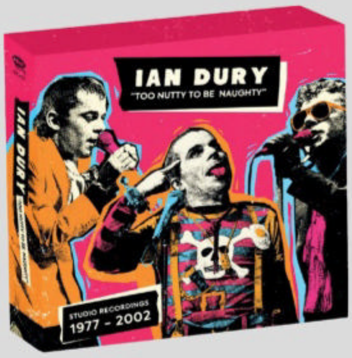
A new 3CD set, released on 10 October, combines Sparks' fifth and sixth studio albums – the Tony Visconti-helmed *Indiscreet* from 1975 and the following year's *Big Beat*. The latter saw Ron and Russell return to the States after a period living in the UK, leaving their established backing band behind and ditching the baroque stylings of *Indiscreet* for a more back-to-basics approach. The third disc includes nine bonus tracks.

❹ TOO NUTTY TO BE NAUGHTY (STUDIO RECORDINGS 1977-2002)

IAN DURY

This 9CD boxset charts Ian Dury's complete studio output as a solo artist as well with The Blockheads and The Music Students. Kicking off with the seminal *New Boots And Panties!!* from 1977, the collection concludes with 2002 posthumous release *Ten More Turnips From The Tip*. Where appropriate, crucial standalone singles have been added as bonus tracks. Released via Demon Records on 14 November.

4



IAN DURY
CD 6
CD 7
CD 8
CD 9

SOULWAX
ALL SYSTEMS ARE LYING

DEEWEE

★★★★½

FROM 2 MANY DJs' MASH-UPS TO DESPACIO'S INFAMOUS DJ NIGHTS WITH JAMES MURPHY, VIA PIONEERING REMIXES, THE DEWAELE BROTHERS HAVE OVERHAULED 21ST CENTURY POP. CAN THEY STILL BE AS INVENTIVE IN THEIR ORIGINAL BAND INCARNATION?

© Nadine Fraczowski
NOVEMBER 2025
CLASSIC POP
BEST NEW RELEASE

Although Soulwax released *From Deewee* in 2017, that was a one-take experiment. In reality, *All Systems Are Lying* is their first proper album since *Any Minute Now* back in 2004. The Dewaele brothers have stayed so busy since, continuing to push pop and dance forward via their productions and remixes, that it is bizarre to realise they haven't made their own fully-fledged contribution in 21 years.

Its title a reference to the general paranoia surrounding all sides of the political divide, *All Systems Are Lying* also hints at the constant busyness David and Stephen undergo to keep the Deewee empire running, trying to loosen themselves up enough to get back to being Soulwax, as clarified in first single *Run Free*: "I want to run free when I choose it/ Play the wrong chord, say something stupid." It's a mantra they achieve on their return: if the lyrics are occasionally stressed, the songs themselves are confident, supremely executed modern pop which frequently take unexpected emotional twists.

Gimme A Reason is the standout ballad, David Dewaele's uncertainty at his most fragile since *Much Against Everyone's Advice* as he pleads: "Gimme a reason, a lie to believe in" over an echoey, dubby piano riff. Other elements slowly intrude – a sturdy bass, whirring electro motif, sinister warped siren – but the plaintive mood remains constant until the final minute, where that siren goes full blare and a giant drum assault suddenly materialises. It's a sonic breakdown which should jar, yet only enhances the sadness of the preceding six minutes.

Anyone wanting Soulwax's snark in the *NY Excuse* mould can head to the teasing bounce of *The False Economy*, where David claims: "Your curated playlist? I always hated what you like" just as the synth orchestra swells around him. It's a musical punchline so perfectly timed, the brothers presumably spent ages getting it just so, but it's delivered with the ease and panache of their greatest remixes.

Polaris is the most complex moment, starting out like *Dazzle Ships*-era OMD, quickly building a contrastingly smooth bass around it and an insistent percussion riff. That's all done before David starts singing about societal breakdown on TV, then announcing: "It's happening all because of you" before the bass gets disarmingly cavernous and the song's second half thwacks you about the chops for your stupidity, ending with a minimal, post-apocalyptic wasteland.

There are so many ideas here, even the 23-second interlude *Dshungel* manages to fit in both a funky, louchely strutting bassline and infectious drum riff before ushering in the dreamy *Constant Happiness Machine*.

As brilliant as 2 Many DJs, Despacio and all those remixes are, praise be that the Dewaeles are back at the day job and sounding as mighty as they've ever been at it. **John Earls**

KYLIE MINOGUE
TENSION TOUR LIVE 25

BMG

★★★★☆

© Chloe Irving

After the lockdown messed up any globetrotting around *Disco*, *Tension* marked Kylie's first world tour since 2019, including her first North American run since 2011.

Kylie has long since charted her visual extravaganzas with fan-pleasing live album formats. But, in a bid to celebrate her recent triumphant romp around the planet, she's issued it to streaming at considerable haste: the tour literally finished the day before the album was announced, ahead of a physical release to follow next year.

Kylie.
Tension Tour
LIVE
25
Tension Tour // Live 2025

As is the case with Kylie in a live environment, her show is as much about the visual stagecraft and what sort of outfits her army of dancers are wearing as we gravitate through various Acts and costume changes, but there's sheer joy coming through on the audio here.

It's also about how our first lady of pop can integrate tracks from the two *Tension* albums into an already stellar back catalogue – and in what form those essentials come, sometimes in medley or significantly altered variations. *Confide In Me* is rendered as a powerful moody strider, blending into a superb *Slow* nodding to its Chemical Brothers remix. *On A Night Like This* is even ravier than normal, while *All The Lovers* glistens and towers more than ever.

The new songs slot in nicely, though, allowing for *Tension*'s title track, *Things We Do For Love*, the effervescent *Hold On To Now*, *Lights Camera Action* and *Edge Of Saturday Night* to sound at home, while of course *Padam Padam* sends the crowd absolutely batshit with delight.

Well aware that she doesn't want civil unrest on her hands, Kylie also makes sure to include the biggest smash hits – could you IMAGINE a Kylie concert where she forgets to pack *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* or *Better The Devil You Know*?

The Tension Tour offered a cathartic, glittery and joyous celebration – the exhilaration radiates throughout.

Whenever and in whatever format it is eventually released, the digital version of *Tension Tour Live 25* is a perfect souvenir. **Ian Wade**

CHRISSIE HYNDE & PALS
DUETS SPECIAL

PARLOPHONE

★★★★☆

© Ki Price

Perhaps because your own tastes rarely align with those of even your favourite artists, duets albums are often awful. Why did they choose that song? Why did they want to sing with him/her?

But the exceptions now include *Duets Special* – an album that grew from a 2023 conversation with German arts administrator Jörn Weisbrodt, during which Hynde suggested she record with Weisbrodt's husband, Rufus Wainwright. From there, the idea snowballed, and she teamed up with Wainwright to record a soulful version of *Always On My Mind*.

DUETS SPECIAL
Chrissie Hynde & Pals

With a band assembled by Benji Lysaght (Lana Del Rey, Father John Misty), *Duets Special* is restrained, its instrumentation largely stripped back.

All concerned imbue covers of classics and less familiar songs with a smoky, late-night vibe, almost as if you wandered into a great chillout afterparty.

A highlight comes right at the start with *Me & Mrs Jones*, the Billy Paul soul standard, which is reframed as a gay lament through the presence of k.d. lang. The Rolling Stones' *Sway*, performed here with Lucinda Williams, is gloriously gnarly and a mournful rendition of Low's *Try To Sleep*, with Debbie Harry, recalls the enormity of losing Mimi Parker. It's followed by Parker's widower, Alan Sparhawk, harmonising on Cass McCombs' *County Line*, a sketch of a song on first listen, but imbued with mysterious power.

I'm Not In Love, featuring Brandon Flowers, doesn't need the original's elaborate chamber pop backing to be effective. *I Can't Help Falling In Love With You*, with the late Mark Lanegan, is surprisingly and beautifully delicate, considering the sheer power both singers have brought to other material. Meanwhile, Dave Gahan croons through Fred Neil's *Dolphins*, a song strongly associated with Tim Buckley.

Inevitably, some duets work less well, but the hits far outweigh the misses and, throughout, Hynde herself reminds you why she's one of our greatest vocalists. **Jonathan Wright**

THE LEMONHEADS
LOVE CHANT

FIRE

★★★☆☆

© Gareth Jones

Between 1987 and 1996, The Lemonheads released seven albums at the lightest side of grunge, featuring alternative anthems *Big Gay Heart* and *Outdoor Type*: warm, funny songs which made Evan Dando a hero for men rejecting alpha stereotypes. Paul Simon hated their successfully perky cover of *Mrs Robinson* but, hey, he seems to hate most things.

In the 29 years since *Car Button Cloth*, bar two middling covers LPs, there has been just one Lemonheads album, 2006's not bad self-titled tunefest.

Now, finally, Dando seems at peace since moving to Brazil. His autobiography has just been published, and here are 11 new Lemonheads songs that, in short, represent the very best and worst of the frontman.

To dispense with the weaker elements: *Be In* is the sludgy rock The Lemonheads used to stand against. *The Key To Victory* is a shambolic spoken word mess which even Juliana Hatfield's reliably heavenly backing vocals can't help lift. The title track is some nice guitar work in search of a song.

Thankfully, whatever turmoil Dando has gone through to get here, at its best *Love Chant* contains the bright, breezy, often seemingly spontaneous harmonies which briefly made The Lemonheads big stars.

The opening *58 Second Song* (it lasts 202 seconds, *actually*) introduces Dando's new gruffer vocals over sugary harmonic guitars fitting right next to *Different Drum*. The anthemic *Cell Phone Blues*' "Easy passing time" chorus is Dando's manifesto set to an Oasis-ish juggernaut recalling his brief bromance with Noel Gallagher. *Wild Thing* and *Togetherness Is All I'm After* show Dando can do heavier guitars.

Best of all, the magnificent *Marauders* is Dando suddenly displaying an insouciant funk, as if he's spent the last 19 years studying Beck's *Odelay*.

Only on the closing *Roky* (musically meh, in truth) does Dando seemingly open up, singing: "It led me onto a world where I don't belong/ But right now? Well, I almost think I do."

Honestly, it's brilliant that Dando feels that way, and hopefully this is the start of something special again. **JE**

THE CHARLATANS
WE ARE LOVE

BMG

★★½☆☆

charlatans
We Are Love

© Cat Stevens

© Cat Stevens

After Tim Burgess recorded his 2022 solo album *Typical Music* at Rockfield – his first visit since Rob Collins's death at the famed residential Welsh studio – the whole band has now returned to the site where they made the landmark *Tellin' Stories*.

The Charlatans state they wanted to honour all their former bandmates on their return to Rockfield, but it's sadly hard to hear much that's valedictory in the quartet's first album for eight years. Burgess has promised new moves, further implied in being produced for the first time by longtime friend Dev Hynes (aka Blood Orange) and his associate, Spector singer Fred Macpherson.

Yet the results are mostly washed out and bloodless, resembling passable demos that fail to have been worked up into fully-formed songs.

Many A Day A Heartache and *Appetite* quickly establish a promising groove recalling their self-titled album, yet nothing much else happens. The opening few seconds of *For The Girls* are a chiming, propulsive Mark Collins riff, before it settles into another mid-paced amble where Burgess sings "It's worth it for the girls" as if he's waiting at a bus stop. Folky sketch *Salt Water* isn't so much minimal as non-existent, quite possibly included on the album as a bet.

The Charlatans are usually so much better than this, and they occasionally remind us of that fact. The irresistible title track offers infectious escapism, while *Deeper And Deeper* is full-throttle electricity, in a vein similar to *How High* or *Love Is The Key*.

Alas, closer *Now Everything* is more typical, a seven-minute trudge that you'll struggle to remember even while it's playing. So much has happened to the band since their last LP, so why is *We Are Love* so sterile?

At least when The Charlatans have made poor albums before, it's usually been down to choosing the wrong potentially interesting path. Here, they appear to have settled for arid professionalism. It doesn't suit them. Surely they won't wait another eight years to correct this distressing misstep. **JE**

© Sam Crowston

RIANNE DOWNEY
THE CONSEQUENCE OF LOVE

RUN ON

★★★★☆

Rianne Downey, best known as Paul Heaton's post-Jacqui Abbott foil, was a promising country singer when he spotted her covering The Beautiful South online. It's a day job that Downey returns to with a grace beyond her years.

While she has stellar country production help in Ryan Hadlock (Zach Bryan, Brandi Carlile), many of these 10 self-penned songs are so instantly familiar that you'd assume Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young had dashed off *Sunblind* during the *Déjà Vu* sessions, or that Jimmy Webb had written *The Song Of Old Glencoe* as a favour for Glen Campbell.

There are hints of Downey's work with Heaton, notably in the opening *Good In Goodbye*'s musical echo of *Don't Marry Her.* But there's a universal yearning in much of the Glaswegian's debut, with *Lost In Blue's* rolling rhymes, reminiscent of Carly Simon at her most imperious.

Downey doesn't exclusively deal in heartbreak, with the final three songs allowing the sunshine in: the wide-open skies and gently psychedelic tenderness of *Nothing Better* is somewhere between George Harrison and Super Furry Animals before the harder-edged *Heart Of Mine* allows her to sign off on an ambivalent note about her future. "They say God loves a trier, Lord knows I'm trying hard," sings Downey. She shouldn't worry – her hard work pays off here. **JE**

BJÖRK
CORNUCOPIA LIVE

OLI

★★★★½

Having previously sworn off their cavernous spaces, Björk hit numerous arenas for *Cornucopia*, a four-year tour which brought her unique touch of the avant-garde to the masses. To be fair, as this 2CD+1DVD/Blu-Ray souvenir proves, the multi-sensory spectacle was always going to require a bigger stage.

Indeed, from the moment Iceland's finest first appears on the giant screen as a CGI "modern marionette," the 100-minute show – recorded at Lisbon's Altice Arena – continually pushes the boundaries of the live pop experience.

There's a seven-piece fairy-winged flute ensemble who impressively balance all their fluttering with beautifully fluid choreography. There's an arsenal of innovative bespoke instruments, including a water-based drumkit made from pumpkin shells. And the whole shebang is heightened by immersive environmental visuals – all blooming flowers and otherworldly fauna – which resemble a David Attenborough documentary on acid.

Somehow, Björk manages to command attention. You can hear a pin drop when she heads into a reverberation chamber sans mic for *Show Me Forgiveness*, while a stunning a cappella rendition of *Hidden Place*, featuring the 50-strong Hamrahlid Choir, ensures that *Cornucopia* sounds as majestic as it looks.

A genuinely awe-inspiring affair. **Jon O'Brien**

LUCRECIA DALT
A DANGER TO OURSELVES

RVNG INTL

★★★★☆

The rise of Colombia-born Lucrecia Dalt to international recognition has been incremental, a reflection perhaps of the way her work, rooted in electronic dance music, has over time become increasingly abstract. Nevertheless, 2022's *¡Ay!*, the bolero-tinged account of an alien visiting Earth, garnered the strongest reviews of Dalt's career.

A Danger To Ourselves, co-produced with Dalt's partner David Sylvian, should consolidate this success. Made up of rich soundscape collages where drum loops and percussion are as often to the fore as electronica, it's an album that takes a while to insinuate itself into your consciousness, but lingers in the imagination once it connects.

a
danger
to
ourselves

Lyrically, the linking themes appear to be vulnerability, especially that which comes along with finding love, and the eroticism of a new relationship, connected in the opening *Cosa Rara*, on which a gruff Sylvian declares: "She said she loved me/ But I don't trust her yet." The overall effect is something like an avant-garde take on Robbie Robertson's *Somewhere Down The Crazy River.*

Other highlights include the sensual *Divina*, where each chord change subtly shifts the mood as the song progresses, and *Stelliformia* finding a sweet spot between ambient, film music and jazz, by no means the only track to do so. Risk the time and *A Danger...* more than repays careful listening. **JW**

© Natascha Horn

TANITA TIKARAM
LIAR (LOVE ISN'T A RIGHT)

COOKING VINYL

★★★★☆

AN ENIGMATIC BUT CANDID STATE OF THE NATION ADDRESS, INFUSED WITH SADNESS, DESPAIR AND A FLICKERING GLIMMER OF HOPE

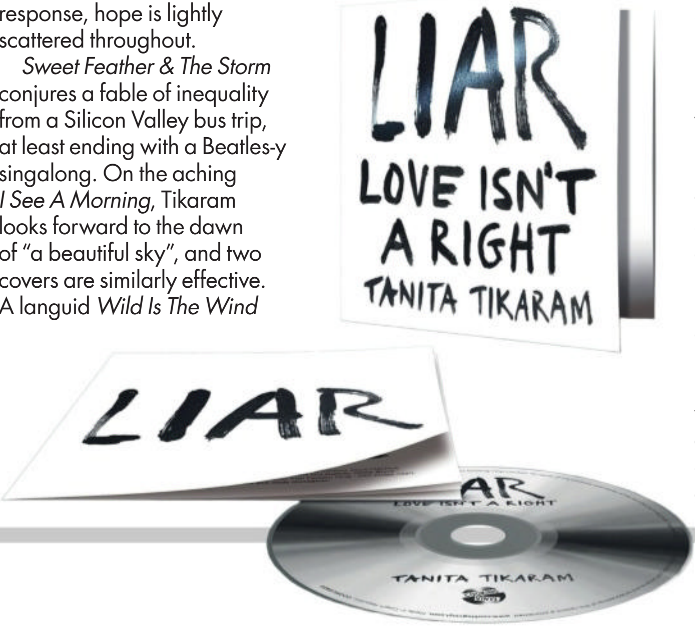
It's approaching 40 years since Tanita Tikaram's debut, *Ancient Heart*, and almost a decade since her last LP, *Closer To The People* – both milestones on her journey to a 10th album as a proudly gay, mixed-race Englishwoman.

LIAR is thus framed by recollections of her youthful outsider status and provoked by an increasingly divided Britain. With bigotry rising again, Tikaram has reached the sad conclusion she's as far from the people as she's ever been.

Certainly, we've come a way since 1988's "good tradition of love and hate", when she still felt "safe inside". But, though *LIAR* is a bold, often legitimately morose response, hope is lightly scattered throughout.

Sweet Feather & The Storm conjures a fable of inequality from a Silicon Valley bus trip, at least ending with a Beatles-y singalong. On the aching *I See A Morning*, Tikaram looks forward to the dawn of "a beautiful sky", and two covers are similarly effective. A languid *Wild Is The Wind* boasts elegant empathy, while the folkish *Love Is A Right* – originally by Molly Drake, mother of Nick – is imbued with welcome Englishness in its emancipatory "I'm nobody's slave" and a baroque, if somewhat tense setting.

Still, if *Lover Don't Come Around*'s merry pace lifts the spirits, it questions the nature of trust: "How could I know/ You were a new day, leading me on?" Whether or not Tikaram spells out her anxiety in explicit terms, desolation is rarely more than a song away. Indeed, with her vocals deep, tremulous and yearning, the gentle opener, *Turn The Lights Down Low*, grieves how "Melancholy friends/ They are so untrue".



But if it also falls to Tikaram's singular voice to soften the blows, it's only to declare, even when *Fais Moi La Solitude* partially switches to French, that she is "Le chant maudit (the cursed song) of broken hearts."

As for *Fear And Chills*, with its short-lived tenderness, the anti-love song centres on bleak imagery: "When Cupid is singing his song/ It's a sad song now." Admittedly, the crescendo raises gratifying goosebumps, but despite the presence of violinist Helen O'Hara, there's little cheer on display.

And yet none of this serves to denounce *LIAR*, Tikaram's admirably honest reaction to an era of deceit and, not least in *Sailboats*' closing imagery, multiple futile losses. That's encapsulated on *This Perfect Friend*: "The Lord he gave the promised land/ But not the wisdom to make it last." It's a far cry from *Twist In My Sobriety*'s optimistic "Different thoughts are good for me". **Wyndham Wallace**

THE LAST DINNER PARTY
FROM THE PYRE

ISLAND

★★★★☆

One of the most controversial bands of recent times, the fuss around The Last Dinner Party when they first went overground in 2023 was often bleakly misogynistic: how *dare* these women suddenly arrive sounding fully-formed without the approval of male broadsheet critics first? At least they wound up the right people, and their debut LP, *Prelude To Ecstasy*, duly reached No.1.

A year later, the Party can't have the same element of surprise, but the confidence in their own distinctive, unique world is gloriously intact. If the sound is now familiar in its heightened drama and luring of the unwary to their doom, there are new elements, like the cavernous bass anchoring *Count The Ways*, the relatively stripped back *Sail Away* relying on a mournful piano to convey Abigail Morris' Grimm mood and *This Is The Killer Speaking* resembling *AM*-era Arctic Monkeys, only with pistols concealed in their culottes.

It's unlikely to change anyone's mind about the band, but why should it?

If The Last Dinner Party are out to populate their landscape with subtle variations from here on in, it's worked for The National, Ramones and The Fall. If you can't get lost in the many manias of *Hold Your Anger*, then being dedicated to absolutely *going for it* isn't for you. **JE**

SAM RYDER
HEARTLAND

ARTIST THEORY

★★★½☆

Having changed the UK's Eurovision narrative, pop's smiliest man must now try to sustain his success without the springboard of the world's biggest song contest. The follow-up to his chart-topping BRIT-nominated debut *There's Nothing But Space, Man!* should give Ryder a fighting chance of once again defeating the odds.

Inspired by the westerns that he grew up watching with his grandfather and recorded in a Nashville log cabin, *Heartland* inevitably leans into the country renaissance. Thankfully, it's not the clichéd beers and trucks kind.

Indeed, slow-burning closer *Eyes On You* sounds tailormade for a drive through the Joshua Tree, and *Suffer In Silence* combines skittering breakbeat and swirling guitar solos with Morricone-esque Wild West twangs. Meanwhile, *White Lies*, which addresses all the craziness Ryder has experienced since Turin 2022, and bitter kiss-off *Oh OK* showcase a sound self-described as frontier soul.

Boasting input from the likes of Mikky Ekko and Steve Mac, there are still plenty of potential hits. Self-acceptance anthem *The Feeling Never Went Away* channels the psychedelic pop of Portugal The Man's earworm *Feel It Still*, with dramatic ballad *Burn It Down* and the euphoric title track allowing Ryder to unleash the falsetto that helped garner so many douze points. **JO**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
VIVA MARINA

MARINA

★★★★☆

In Hamburg's cosy Eimsbüttel quarter hides a little German label who have made a name beyond their borders, not only for championing international indie sounds but with their classy, vintage designs. So, since it's no mean feat to have survived since 1993, Marina are celebrating their 100th release with a suitably joyous compilation.

Many names will be familiar, whether Shack, with their trademark lyricism present on *Carousel*, or Teenage Fanclub's Norman Blake, here united with The Pearlfishers' David Scott in delicious harmonies on a cover of The Roches' *The Hammond Song*. Scott is back again with an intimate Taylor Swift cover of *The Last Great American Dynasty* and, with The Pearlfishers, on the timeless piano ballad *Limelight*.

VIVA MARINA
MARINA ONE HUNDRED

Indeed, Scots are out in force. Incomparable torch singers The Bathers offer *No Risk No Glory*'s extravagant blue-eyed soul; Josef K's Malcolm Ross brings a prescient *Heartbroken All Over Again*; Orange Juice's James Kirk joins Starry Skies' Warren McIntyre for the chirpy *Iron Star*; and there's sophisticated jazz from the Colin Steele Quartet on *The Vampires Of Camelon*.

For a label whose icons include Burt Bacharach and The Beach Boys, the addition of Van Dyke Parks' charmingly innocent *Chateau Marmont* (from 2014's *Super Chief*) will have provoked further festivities, and don't miss the reformed Free Design's fragrant *Listen*. **WW**

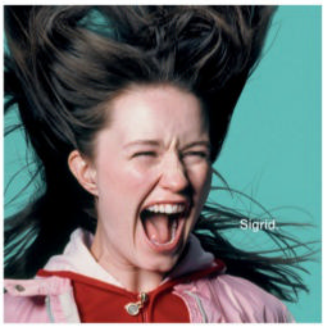
SIGRID
THERE'S ALWAYS MORE THAT I COULD SAY

ISLAND EMI

★★★★☆

Inspired by various solo retreats and a conscious snubbing of content culture, Sigrid's third album was designed to "rediscover the joy of making music simply for the love of it." She certainly sounds rejuvenated on a record which, apart from the title track's vulnerable ballad, is dripping in both attitude and the maximalist side of pop.

Single *Fort Knox* might be Sigrid's career-best, even more infectious than *Don't Kill My Vibe*, as a vehement kiss-off ("Oh, you said I'm irreplaceable/ Go ahead, try, I wish you the best") which sounds like a *Brat*-ified ABBA. Hell hath no fury like a Norwegian pop star scorned. On the soaring *Kiss The Sky*, Sigrid proudly admits to being a "diva with a cold heart."



The whole thing opens with the bang of *I'll Always Be Your Girl*, a blend of cheerleader chants and punchy New Wave which brilliantly doubles up as a battle of the sexes.

Bergen's finest isn't totally averse to showcasing a sweeter side, however, with Noughties indie-pop throwback *Jellyfish* the story of two kindred spirits locking eyes in a crowded club – a happier alternative to Robyn's *Dancing On My Own*, if you will.

Despite its title, the vibrant and fully committed *There's Always More That I Could Say* suggests Sigrid left nothing in the tank. **JO**

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING
NIGHT FLIGHT
THE LAST FLIGHT REMIXES

PUBLIC SERVICE BROADCASTING
NIGHT FLIGHT (THE LAST FLIGHT REMIXES)
SO RECORDINGS

★★★½☆

Last year's original *The Last Flight* was remarkably uplifting, given it charted Amelia Earhart's ill-fated 1937 attempt to fly around the world. It was also PSB's best album, replete with glorious melodies. You can understand why bandleader J Willgoose wanted to spend more time with the project, handing tracks over to the likes of Alex Silva and alt-J, in addition to remixing himself as Late Night Final. Some of the changes are surprisingly subtle, but the overall tone is darker. **JW**

Montjuïc
THINGS MUST CHANGE

MONTJUÏC
THINGS MUST CHANGE
LAST NIGHT FROM GLASGOW

★★★★☆

After issuing happy/sad electro/acoustic numbers, Montjuïc – named after a beautiful region of Barcelona – have rapidly become one of the best new acts around. Look closely and you'll find each of the duo have previous: singer James Hackett with The Orchids and Ian Carmichael in One Dove. Initially coming together over lockdown via Zoom, the pair's debut includes the dreamlike *Olympia*, the sundowning of *I'll Get Used To*, and gorgeous *If I Become*, which epitomises the twilight melancholia. It's a little gem. **IW**

The Orb
BUDDHIST HIPSTERS

THE ORB
BUDDHIST HIPSTERS
COOKING VINYL

★★★½☆

You might not have thought of The Orb since the 90s, but they've been here all this time, quietly doing their thing: mixing dub, house and samples with a playful sense of humour. The opening *Spontaneously Combust* couldn't be a more welcoming invitation to return, with a kooky sample sounding verrry much like the one of Rickie Lee Jones on *Little Fluffy Clouds*. But their 18th album really flies when they mix things up a bit, as on the arabesque hip-hop of *Arabebonics* and perky pop-house of *The Oort Cloud (Too Night)*. **Beth Simpson**

Victim Of A Casual Thing
THE CLAUSE

THE CLAUSE
VICTIM OF A CASUAL THING
BELIEVE

★★★★☆

Although viewed as part of the cult indie revival which has seen The Lathums, The K's and Lottery Winners quietly reach No.1, The Clause's debut has much in common with fellow Brummies Duran Duran: *In My Element* and *Tell Me What You Want* would fit on *Notorious*, while the closing anthem *Don't Blink* is their own *Ordinary World*. It slinks as much as it swaggers, Liam Deakin's guitar bringing a choppy disco under Pearce Macca's conviction. A riotous party, with a bright, unabashed groove as big as their choruses. Casually brilliant. **JE**

MAGNETIC SKIES
FRAGMENTS

MAGNETIC SKIES
FRAGMENTS
REPRINT

★★★½☆

Magnetic Skies have clearly learned from the best. On the back of supporting Heaven 17 and Altered Images, the retro-futuristic synth-pop trio embrace a panoramic musical vision on their second album. *Closing In* nods to Depeche Mode's more danceable moments, standout *Everything's Alright* leans into swooning darkwave and *Slow Motion* is a delightful throwback to post-*Dare* Human League. Meanwhile, the closing *She Calls Me On* settles into a meditative groove that conjures the gloom of The Cure's *Disintegration*. **Annie Zaleski**

ASHNIKKO
SMOOCHIES
PARLOPHONE

★★★½☆

"Like a mess of crumbs and gum in receipts and lipgloss that I've forgotten about," is how North Carolina rapper/singer Ashnikko describes her second album. Unsurprisingly, then, *Smoochies* is another slab of hyperpop which makes Charli XCX sound shy and retiring. There's thumping techno (*I Want My Boyfriends To Kiss*), Noughties electroclash (*Itty Bitty*) and numerous party anthems channelling PC Music. It's a relentlessly inventive and wickedly funny listen, albeit one that will also likely leave those of a certain age thoroughly exhausted. **JO**

MILES KANE
SUNLIGHT IN THE SHADOWS

MILES KANE
SUNLIGHT IN THE SHADOWS
EASY EYE SOUND

★★★★☆

At the fifth time of asking, *Sunlight In The Shadows* may finally put indie journeyman Miles Kane's career firmly centre stage away from The Last Shadow Puppets. Produced by The Black Keys' Dan Auerbach, it's a full-throttle exercise in nostalgia, whether the T. Rex glam of *Electric Flower*, the down and dirty blues-rock of *Coming Down The Road* or a swaggering cover of The Flamin' Groovies' *Slow Death*. Kane has never sounded better either, playing the crooner on orchestral ballad *Always In Over My Head* as convincingly as the leather-clad rock'n'roller elsewhere. **JO**

GODS OF DIMENSION

CIRCLE 60
GODS OF DIMENSION
OCTOPHONIC

★★★★☆

Although their members' CV encompasses Gorillaz, Muse, Delakota and Penguin Café, Circle 60 are most notable for being led by Senseless Things' rhythm section of Cass Browne and Morgan Nicholls. Helped by Captain Sensible's savage guitar on *Mother Laudanum*, it's mostly gonzoid punk, whose surface simplicity masks killer melodies like *She Got Bored* and the swaggering *Martian Surprise*. The sampling in *Astral Planes* hints at their post-Senseless dance excursions, but mostly this is Browne and Nicholls out to have big dumb fun. **JE**

FRANKIE GOES TO HOLLYWOOD
WELCOME TO THE PLEASUREDOME

UMR

★★★★★

IMPORTANT ALBUM GETS IMPORTANT BOXSET: FINALLY, THE DEFINITIVE WORD ON THE DEFINITIVE ALBUM OF THE 80s HAS ARRIVED, SHOWING WHO WAS BEHIND THE ORIGINAL IDEAS

Of course Trevor Horn is a genius. But part of Horn's talent is in seeing ideas through to their maximum potential. And this gigantic boxset of possibly *the* ultimate 80s album reveals how the initial idea of Frankie Goes To Hollywood was absolutely *not* Trevor Horn's.

The key disc in this 7CD+ Blu-Ray set (Steven Wilson's new mix of the album is also on 2LP) is the early years CD1, because ZTT latched on to *Relax*, *Two Tribes* and *The Power Of Love* when they were already sounding fantastic.

Holly Johnson sings like a dream: powerful, commanding but also lean and hungry. It's a very rare combination.

It's as important, given the endless claims of how they didn't play on the album itself, that Mark O'Toole and Ped Gill were a mighty rhythm section, too. Before the precocious Brian Nash joined, O'Toole's rolling bass is a lead instrument, and he unwittingly invents Blur's Alex James during his muscular playing in the first 1982 demo of *Relax*.

All that Frankie maybe lacked, and presumably is why labels were too blind to start a bidding war, was an obvious direction: *Love Has Got A Gun* (eventually becoming *Wish*) is pure funk, *Krisco Kisses* is frantic post-punk, *Two Tribes* is all speedy urgency, *Welcome To The Pleasuredome* louche disco, *Relax* on John Peel all these things and more.

The variety helped when it came to the endless remixes later. For all ZTT's steely vision, never forget these songs were always adaptable for whatever flavour you wanted to enhance on any given 12" (or cassingle.) The 23-minute *The Album* version of *Relax* is a marvel for keeping your attention.

The more you're bombarded by Frankie, the less obvious they sound. You could plausibly theorise Paul Rutherford and Johnson's gay messaging – so upfront and explicit, it's possibly even less likely to get near the mainstream now – being realised by three "lads" is why it's so out there: their lengthy, diverse mix of influences can be detected if you want, but it's more fun to just let it all blast you into another dimension.

While there's a CD each dedicated to *Relax* and *Two Tribes* remixes, the boxset is at its most adventurous when alighting on the less familiar songs. What a great B-side *Happy Hi!* was, a carefree breeze where Johnson is at his most casually convincing, while his laugh in the mixes of *The World Is My Oyster* is the biggest Proustian rush anyone will experience across all seven hours of music.

Forget the stories of feuds and its long gestation. Ignore the chart-manipulating stories of their many single formats: here is why Frankie were so important. How brilliant that they were so massive and so themselves. We could do with them back again. More importantly, we need another gang of miscreants to be this bold and this unignorable. **John Earls**

NOVEMBER 2025
CLASSIC POP
BEST REISSUE

SOFT CELL
THE ART OF FALLING APART

UMR

★★★★★

Adopting the similarly maximalist approach of the recent reissues of *Non-Stop Erotic Cabaret* and *Non-Stop Ecstatic Dancing*, Soft Cell's infamously "Well, *now* what?" second full album here becomes a 6CD set, with all 10 songs getting extended versions, external remixes, demos, live cuts and instrumentals. You can't argue there's anything missing here, that's for sure. (OK, the 2LP edition only adding on the single edits is comparatively rubbish.)

SOFT CELL
The Art of Falling Apart

Marc Almond and Dave Ball relive its chaos elsewhere this issue, and in some ways it's bizarre to see such a completely mad record receive this degree of lavish treatment. But, 42 years on, *The Art Of Falling Apart* remains the gold standard fame comedown record, as well as introducing unsuspecting pop fans to a world of otherness in music only matched elsewhere by Adam And The Ants' B-sides.

While a few of the external remixes are interesting – Atomizer's take on the title track is punishing in a whole new way, Marcas Lancaster amps up the kitsch in *Where The Heart Is*, The Hacker at least tries to bring a cohesive sinister gloss to *Martin* – it's unusually the demos which are the most fascinating aspect of the extras, in showing the potential alternative pathways Soft Cell could have taken.

Loving You, Hating Me might have become a shiny pop moment after all, while *Heat*'s percussive demo hints it could have ruled the dancefloor if Almond wasn't determined to highlight its balmy sexuality.

© Peter Ashworth

Yet, if there were moments which might just have kept them in the mainstream a little longer and compensated for the lack of *Torch* in the tracklisting, as a grandiose statement of rejection, *The Art Of Falling Apart* is hard to beat.

Forever The Same and the title track are great examples of Ball's warped beats, while Almond's disgust at everything around him make *Kitchen Sink Drama* and *Where The Heart Is* magnificently heightened, repulsed ballads. And then there's *Numbers* and *Martin*, horrific yet addictive in entirely different ways. Well done on adding so extensively to the original, without losing its essential unknowability. **JE**

SIMPLE MINDS
ONCE UPON A TIME

UMR

★★★★½

Once Upon A Time is the album on which, by common consent, Simple Minds threw off the last shackles of their New Wave roots and fully embraced the big gestures of stadium rock.

What's less remarked upon is how incredibly *good* they were at it: your mileage may vary on whether it was the right evolutionary step for the former art-punks, but there's a compelling argument for these eight tracks being the absolute high watermark of the genre.

SIMPLE MINDS
ONCE UPON A TIME

(And, whisper it, better than anything U2 did in the 80s.)

Producers Jimmy Iovine and Bob Clearmountain demanded more song discipline than the band were used to, and the results feel almost ruthlessly engineered for US radio play. But, you know, in a good way.

Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill had faith in *Alive & Kicking* as an even stronger calling card than *that* song from *that* film, but in truth it's probably the stodgiest effort here – certainly compared to the propulsive energy of *Sanctify Yourself* and *Oh Jungleland*, or the skyscraping title track.

Ghost Dancing, meanwhile, is peak Live Aid-era conscience rock, managing to namecheck the Lebanon, South Africa, the Irish Troubles, the Polish Solidarity movement and "Mother Ethiopia" in a single verse.

This 5CD 40th anniversary edition is effectively a repackage of 2015's previous boxset reissue, including two discs apiece of B-sides, mixes, rarities and the *Live In The City Of Light* album, which captures the band at the height of their pomp at Paris' 6,800-capacity Le Zénith arena in 1986.

The single disc, 'ruby red' vinyl version, though, is quietly historic, correcting one of rock's biggest self-owns by finally adding *Don't You (Forget About Me)* to *Once Upon A Time*'s tracklisting. Rarely has a song title felt more appropriate. **Paul Kirkley**

PRINCE AND THE REVOLUTION
AROUND THE WORLD IN A DAY

NPG RECORDS/WARNER RECORDS

★★★★½

Elsewhere this issue, *CP* tells the wildly entertaining story of how Prince upended his *Purple Rain* commercial peak. That the follow-up, *Around The World In A Day,* is as entertaining as its creation is a feat only an artist at Prince's level could pull off.

Sure, it demands more attention than its predecessor but, in *Raspberry Beret* and *Pop Life,* it's also got two of Prince's greatest singles. It also houses most of the various Princes, with the taut funk of *Tamborine* and *America* the only two consecutive songs that sound like a normal album continuation.

If *Around The World In A Day* is the start of Prince being seen as wilfully obscure, then how to explain the presence of gorgeous ballad *Condition Of The Heart,* or ending the album with an unshowy reminder in *Temptation* that here was one of the all-time great guitarists and, hey, the song itself rocks hard, too?

Only on *The Ladder* does Prince come unstuck. It should be a moving evocation of his faith, but it's a jazzy blancmange, a reminder that one of Prince's few failings was rarely being able to show his real inner self without becoming mawkish. This ultimately leads to 2001's *The Rainbow Children* – and nobody needs that.

After Prince's previous incredible expanded boxsets, it's a shame that there's only a 2CD/3LP set to mark the album's 40th anniversary. Still, if there are none of the widely bootlegged alternative versions of the title track or *Raspberry Beret,* it is efficient in rounding up the era's official extras.

© The Prince Estate/Credit: Jeff Katz

It means 7" and 12" versions of the four singles and their B-sides, most notably the "Yes, it does deserve to be that long" 21-minute *America.*

Initially intended for Vanity – you can hear her vocals in the 12" mix – with a straight lyrical swap as *Boy, Girl* fares less well in its male form, its fruity lyrics like a bad Prince pastiche. Nice tune, though. **JE**

OMD
CRUSH

UMR/VIRGIN

★★★★☆

When OMD set out to record *Crush,* they had one major aim in mind: to break America. It was a lofty goal, as the Liverpool band were just starting to make US inroads with 1984's *Junk Culture,* which had spawned *Locomotion* and *Tesla Girls.*

But *Crush* did indeed become OMD's highest-charting album ever in the US, reaching No.38, and spawning their first Top 40 hit there, the dreamy sounding (if bittersweet) *So In Love,* as well as synth-pop confection *Secret.*

A close listen to *Crush* 40 years later, however, illustrates that OMD achieved success without sacrificing their penchant for experimentation. The LP's second half especially leans into the esoteric vibe of their earlier work, between the Joan of Arc-referencing *La Femme Accident,* industrial-tinted *88 Seconds In Greensboro* and the haunted electro-goth of *The Native Daughters Of The Golden West.*

This 40th anniversary 2CD's second disc includes B-sides (cue up the epic *Firegun*) and deconstructed extended remixes led by a pair of great *So In Love* reimaginings. Even more intriguing are seven unreleased tracks from the album's sessions, most of which could have easily landed on the main LP.

Highlights include the insistent electropop gem *Wheels Of Steel,* as well as two versions of the future Murray Head cover *Lana Turner* – including a debonair take that's *very* Bowie-esque – and a solemn, yearning *Choral.*

Demos of *All Or Nothing* and *Drift,* meanwhile, bear the unmistakable imprint of the Fairlight, a machine that at the time resided at the studio in Paul Humphreys' garage. ("I know what his rough sketches sound like, and *Drift* is a Paul noodle," Andy McCluskey tells *Classic Pop.*)

In hindsight, while *Crush* opened doors for OMD in America, the evolution also helped the band continue pushing forward – a testament to the kind of creative hunger and curiosity the group *still* exhibits today. **Annie Zaleski**

THOMPSON TWINS
INDUSTRY & SEDUCTION: THE BEST OF

BMG

★★★★☆

THE FIRST AUTHORISED THOMPSON TWINS BEST OF HIGHLIGHTS THEIR UNIQUENESS, AND HOW MANY STRANGE CONFECTIONS ARE ON OFFER BEYOND THE HITS

The third Thompson Twins *Best Of* and first since 2003 is significant as the only compilation the trio have authorised: Tom Bailey and Alannah Currie chose the tracklist and are extensively interviewed in the sleevenotes, while Joe Leeway helped with its design.

As you'd expect, the hits are present on CD1/2LP, though even the odd maverick album track slips in among the classics: the hymnal *Future Days*, the (admittedly slightly dated) travelogue *The Gap* and, especially of note, the chilling *Kamikaze*, redolent of the bleaker side of early 80s electronics.

That *No Peace For The Wicked* – an irresistible slice of jaunty, apparent euphoria, which also frowns at the workrate of early 80s pop life – is also present encapsulates how perfectly realised the Thompson Twins factory was honed once the trio decided to redesign themselves as a pop band. They could just as easily have included *Judy Do* or *Who Can Stop The Rain?* as examples of how many other potential hits lay in wait.

Named after Thompson Twins' varied approach to their art, *Industry & Seduction* really takes flight on CD2 of its 3CD edition, featuring 20 of Bailey and Currie's favourite obscurities, from the pre-fame years to their later dance incarnation as Babble. It's a shame only three pre-trio songs make it, none from second LP *Set*, which showed both the restless anarchy of their initial six-piece line-up and Bailey's innate ear for melody: let later producer Alex Sadkin loose on *Squares And Triangles* and it might've detonated the chart.

A THOMPSON TWINS COLLECTION
INDUSTRY & SEDUCTION

In wanting more of that early mania, the problem would be what to leave out. There's nothing from the first post-Leeway album *Close To The Bone*, a predictably poor record given the duo's personal traumas at the time. Hearing them recover is a delight, especially with the compilation's well-chosen mix: the froth of *Queen Of The U.S.A.* and *Red Hot + Blue* contribution *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*, the Faithless-adjacent mayhem of Babble's *Take Me Away* and *Tribe*, the sheer "Whatever is going on?" joy of their final album as Thompson Twins in the fabulous meltdown of *Come Inside* and *Strange Jane*.

According to Bailey, Thompson Twins' name isn't as celebrated as much as it should be. He has a point: not only was the cultural mix of their line-up unique, but there remains a maverick spirit in just how expertly three outsiders made pop with an edge.

That they're ready to celebrate what they achieved at last means you should, too. **JE**

VARIOUS ARTISTS
NOW YEARBOOK '91 / NOW YEARBOOK 76 EXTRA / NOW 12" 80s VOLUME TWO / NOW 12" 80s 1985 PART TWO

NOW

★★★★☆ / ★★★★☆ / ★★★★★ ★★★★★

The time travelling giddiness of NOW means it's easy to be in several decades all at once. Take the new *Yearbook* arriving at 1991 after the joy of 1976's – it couldn't have been a more different 12 months, with the foot soldiers of regional rave like Oceanic, Quartz and Rozalla bringing up the rear to titans The KLF and Prodigy, and the "Technically, he had six chart entries" one-hit wonder Chesney Hawkes looking like Mr Longevity compared to Zoe, Stevie B and Divinyls.

The arrivals of Saint Etienne (and Cola Boy – hem hem), Seal and Cathy Dennis gave the pop landscape a shot in the arm among the revivals of The Waterboys, The Clash and Patsy Cline. It all means one can forget Scorpions (*tries to forget Scorpions*) and just how *vast* Simply Red were.

If you want to finish your plate of 1976, its *Yearbook Extra* has belters from Roxy Music, ELO, Wings, Elton, Be Bop Deluxe and 10cc, all gamely competing against Disco Duck.

NOW
YEARBOOK
'91

NOW
YEARBOOK
'76
EXTRA

12"
80s
VOLUME TWO

NOW
12" 80s
1985

Meanwhile, following the first instalment last year, which covered 1980-82, *12" 80s Volume Two* shifts its focus to 1983-84 with five LPs containing essential lengthers by Frankie Goes To Hollywood (*Two Tribes (Annihilation)*), New Order (*Blue Monday*), Propaganda (*Das Testament Des Dr Mabuse*) and Grandmaster Flash And Melle Mel (*White Lines (Don't Do It)*). That's not dismissing Hazell Dean's *Searchin'* (pictured), Laura Branigan's *Gloria* and John Luongo's reswizzle of KC & The Sunshine Band's *Give It Up*. It's the art of the 12" at its height – until the next edition, obviously.

Volume 3 will inevitably cherry pick the best of 1985, having 46 to choose from in *Now 12" 80s 1985 Part Two*, such as Wham!'s *I'm Your Man*, Sheila E's *A Love Bizarre*, the exponential shoulderpaddery of Rene & Angela's *I'll Be Good* or the bleak-yet-educational shape-throw of the Destruction mix of Paul Hardcastle's *19*, as well as the CD debut of Scritti Politti's *Perfect Way*.

Once again, these great collections highlight how compiling NOW albums must be the best job in the world. **Ian Wade**

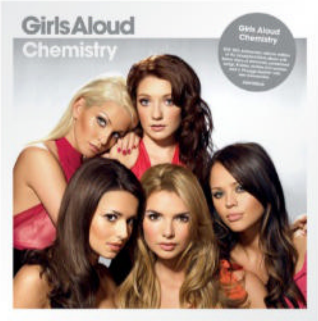
GIRLS ALOUD
CHEMISTRY

UMR

★★★★½

An exemplary reissue campaign reaches album three, with its now standard 3CD and first-time-on-vinyl choice for Girls Aloud.

Even at the time, no matter that it was around Christmas, it was nonsensical that such a classic album only reached No.11 in the UK. To be generous to all concerned for this idiotic statistic, covering Dee C Lee's *See The Day* was a misfire – it's too close to purist soul to work and it should never have been a single, especially when sublime album tracks like *Swinging London Town* and equally teasing pop of *Models* were on offer instead.



Still, *Biology* is one of the greatest pop songs of the century, and when even the opening scene setter *Intro* is a riotous 42-second banger, rather than a race for the Skip Track button like most such interludes, the public should still be adopting a hangdog look 20 years on at its dismissive treatment of the Alouds at their peak.

Bar a wretched and wholly unnecessary cover of Wheatus' *Teenage Dirtbag*, the bonus material is also reliably excellent, typified by the new remix on CD3's mixes being of a B-side, Charli XCX producer Jon Shave let loose on *Singapore*'s relatively minimalist glide.

Even a previously unreleased song – *You Go Too Fast*, intended for a cancelled tie-in with the long-forgotten Lindsay Lohan film *Herbie: Fully Loaded*, is a blast. **JE**

PULP
DIFFERENT CLASS

UMR

★★★½☆

One of Britpop's greatest albums, Pulp capitalised on finally breaking through with the previous year's *His 'N' Hers*. Having waited so long for stardom, they weren't going to waste their opportunity. You will obviously know *Common People*, *Disco 2000*, *Mis-Shapes* and *Something Changed*, but then you'll also probably be familiar with the similarly perfectly documented dramatics of *Underwear*, *Bar Italia* and *F.E.E.L.I.N.G.C.A.L.L.E.D.L.O.V.E.*

PULP
DIFFERENT CLASS

If Jarvis Cocker's character studies are rightly acclaimed, the mix of general pop tomfoolery and perfectly realised moments accompanying his insight mean *Different Class* lived up to its title.

Of course, Pulp's last-minute slot as Glastonbury headliners has gone down as part of the era's myth, and it's finally released 30 years on as part of a 4LP/2CD reissue. A mark off for how that's been done, though. Glastonbury should be available separately, because it's the only extra here: the B-sides and demos from 2006's now rare and frankly superior reissue have vanished.

How hard would it have been for Universal to keep those and find room for the remixes and other known demos around the album to have been included?

At least that Glastonbury performance still sounds majestic, but it's clearly too much effort to have included film of it on a Blu-Ray/DVD, too. **JE**

CARLY RAE JEPSEN
E*MO*TION

UMR

★★★★☆

It's a head-scratcher as to why Carly Rae Jepsen isn't a bigger pop star. Although beloved by critics, she's never quite cracked the charts, aside from the global No.1 single *Call Me Maybe* and Owl City collab *Good Time*.

This 10th anniversary edition of Jepsen's third long-player offers yet more evidence that the Canadian singer-songwriter deserves far more widespread mainstream success.

Led by *I Really Like You* – a giddy song about being totally crushed out, which originally made No.3 in the UK – it's a retro-kissed synth-pop tour de force about fairytale romance (the sax-driven *Run Away With Me*) and complicated emotions (the kicky *Boy Problems*). It also features the robo-pop of *Black Heart* and *Ballerina* soundtrack anthem *Cut To The Feeling*.

CARLY RAE JEPSEN
E·MO·TION

More notable on the reissue are six bonus tracks, comprising the Kyle Shearer and Rostam remixes of *Run Away With Me* plus four previously unreleased songs which amplify the ecstatic vibe of the album.

More is sleek disco-funk comparing favourably to Dua Lipa, while *Guardian Angel* is a slice of Kylie-esque throwback pop. *Back Of My Heart*, in contrast, is breathy R&B, while *Lost In Devotion* exudes majestic 80s pop balladry. *E*Mo*Tion* has aged like fine wine. Perhaps this new edition will finally give the album its due. **AZ**

THE DREAM SYNDICATE
MEDICINE SHOW

FIRE

★★★★☆

The Dream Syndicate were part of LA's Paisley Underground psychedelic rock throwback movement, which also spawned Bangles. Thanks to their 1982 debut *The Days Of Wine And Roses* – a collection full of lean, goth-Dylan barnstorming – the quartet landed on a major label in A&M for their second LP.

Produced by Sandy Pearlman, *Medicine Show* had a cleaner sound and prominent piano flourishes, but maintained The Dream Syndicate's dark vibe, courtesy of Karl Precoda's psychedelic blues guitar excursions and Steve Wynn's evocative storytelling.

the dream syndicate
medicine show

Standouts include the pointed *Bullet With My Name On It*, Dylan-esque drawl *Merrittville* and cautionary *Burn*.

This 4CD set houses the original album and a whopping 29 unreleased recordings, with a heavy emphasis on live tracks. Highlights include sprawling takes on The Velvet Underground-meets-Neil Young noisy epic *John Coltrane Stereo Blues*; a roughshod rehearsal of *Burn* with former bassist Kendra Smith; and a complete radio broadcast. A clutch of live covers, led by a seething version of CCR's *Born On The Bayou* and a shambling *Don't Fear The Reaper*, are also excellent curios.

Medicine Show didn't propel The Dream Syndicate to stardom, but 41 years later, this reissue feels like sweet redemption. **AZ**

MAXÏMO PARK
A CERTAIN TRIGGER

PIAS

★★★★☆

Although still an entertaining going concern – eighth album *Stream Of Life* just missed the Top 20 last year – Maxïmo Park will forever be associated with the headrush energy of their early hits *Apply Some Pressure*, *Graffiti* and *Going Missing*, which saw them burst out of Newcastle during the Noughties indie boom.

A compelling frontman from the off, Paul Smith would either read a book onstage or scissor-kick his way across it, a divergence writ large on their debut. One of the first albums to be produced by Paul Epworth, he was the perfect foil for ensuring Maxïmo Park stood slightly to one side of the era's boisterousness, capturing both a sly groove in *Apply Some Pressure* and *Now I'm All Over The Shop*, and the erudition which made *Going Missing* a favourite of both hedonists and students, while *Once, A Glimpse* was sinister underneath Smith's jittery delivery and Tom English's strident percussion.

MAXÏMO PARK
A CERTAIN
TRIGGER

For its 20th anniversary, 2005's rarities compilation *Missing Songs* is back on the 3LP, which also adds (as does the 2CD) further obscurities via five more demos, five radio sessions, their rattling charity cover of Augustana's *Wasteland*, spoken word B-side *La Quinta* and Cristian Vogel of Super Collider's ho-hum remix of *I Want You To Stay*. **JE**

ELTON JOHN
CAPTAIN FANTASTIC AND THE BROWN DIRT COWBOY

UMR

★★★★☆

Half a century ago, Elton John was at the absolute peak of his powers when *Captain Fantastic And The Brown Dirt Cowboy* became the first album ever to debut at No.1 in the US, reportedly selling 1.4 million copies within four days.

Propelled by marching powder and an avaricious record company, Elton had hitherto brought out nine albums in six years containing a glut of brilliant, inspired singles and a fair bit of filler. This 1975 concept album conceived by Bernie Taupin is one for the ages, though; a rock opera that mines the ineffectual years living in penury whilst selling their wares on Tin Pan Alley.

CAPTAIN
FANTASTIC
and the
BROWN DIRT
COWBOY
ELTON JOHN

Elton's band, soon to be disassembled, are in fighting form on tracks that often breach the seven-minute mark.

At times, the rawness is visceral: *Someone Saved My Life Tonight* never fails to occasion a lump in the throat, while *We All Fall In Love Sometimes* is positively Queen-like in its emotional drama and lofty ambitions.

This 2CD/2LP 50th anniversary edition features demos, a 28-page booklet and some of Elton's 1974 diary entries.

Furthermore, there are live renditions recorded in 2005, delivered in Elton's combustible, close-to-the-mic style that works well in a field but less so on tape.
Jeremy Allen

KT Tunstall
Eye to the Telescope

KT TUNSTALL
EYE TO THE TELESCOPE

BMG

★★★★½

KT Tunstall fans should feel spoiled by this 21st anniversary reissue of the Edinburgh singer's debut, which boasted the hits *Black Horse And The Cherry Tree* and *Suddenly I See*. As well as a ton of live and acoustic versions, B-sides and BBC sessions, the 4CD/2LP set adds three recently completed songs that were abandoned during the original writing sessions. Wistful ballad *Anything At All*, punchy stomper *Cancerian* and a dreamy new title track all earn their place on what, two decades on, remains a highly impressive opening statement. **PK**

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
Love Kraft

SUPER FURRY ANIMALS
LOVE KRAFT

STRANGETOWN

★★★★☆

For nigh on a decade, they were one of Britain's most dependable singles band, but SFA never quite made the classic album they were capable of. *Love Kraft* came close, though. Much of it was recorded in a heatwave in Spain and some of that sultriness seeped into the music, particularly *Ohio Heat* and swoonsome *Frequency*. Also included in this 20th anniversary 2CD are demos and some quite brilliant B-sides: *Sunny Seville* and *Never More* show they were capable of knocking off catchy-but-quirky pop in their sleep. **Beth Simpson**

the lilac time

THE LILAC TIME
LOOKING FOR A DAY IN THE NIGHT / LIVE

NEEDLE MYTHOLOGY

★★★★½ / ★★★★☆

Looking For A Day In The Night from 1999 (now getting its first vinyl release) is an exquisite example of Stephen Duffy's songwriting craft, seamlessly marrying English sensibilities with effortless Americana, helped along by producer Stephen Street and some fine pedal steel from Melvin Duffy (no relation). A rediscovered live outing from 2007 also gets its first release, showcasing the gorgeous vocal interplay between Duffy and his wife, Claire Worrall. **JA**

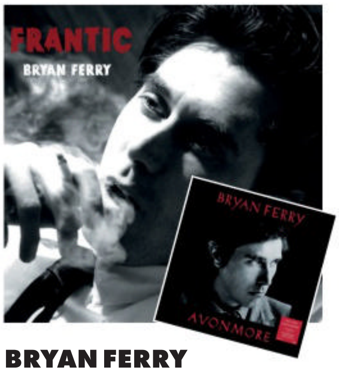
Kirsty MacColl
Free World
The Best Of 1979-2000

KIRSTY MacCOLL
FREE WORLD: THE BEST OF

DEMON

★★★★☆

The Kirsty MacColl catalogue has been raided on many occasions over the years for compilations, so why the need to purchase this one? At 30 tracks, *Free World* is a more succinct overview than 2014's *All I Ever Wanted* or the *See That Girl* boxset from 2023. And the music? MacColl's songwriting brilliance is widely acknowledged. Less so is how she adapted to any style, be it country (*Don't Come The Cowboy With Me Sonny Jim*), baggy (*Walking Down Madison*), or Latin-influenced material from 2000's *Tropical Brainstorm*. **BS**



BRYAN FERRY
FRANTIC / AVONMORE

BMG

★★★★☆ / ★★★★☆

Following the excellent *Loose Talk* with Amelia Barrett, Bryan Ferry gets two other relatively recent great albums back on vinyl. It is easy to see the join to *Loose Talk* from 2014's *Avonmore*, featuring both lively Todd Terje collab *Johnny And Mary* and the chilled scratching of *Driving Me Wild*, though it also houses Johnny Marr co-write *Soldier Of Fortune*. 2002's *Frantic* is more unified, despite its half-covers/half-newies mix. Ferry settles into an older, more reflective mood, though two Dylan interpretations twinkle with mischief, partly thanks to his perfect diction. **JE**

XTC
drums and wires

XTC
DRUMS AND WIRES

APEHOUSE

★★★★☆

Polished, confident, and *perhaps* more conventional, XTC's third – and first US – album is still frantic (*Outside World*), wonky (*Millions*) and stomping (*Life Begins At The Hop*), with *Making Plans For Nigel*'s Devo-esque rhythms its peak. These formats include Steven Wilson's 2014 mix finally on vinyl and back on CD, the latter with five additional tracks. Wilson's Dolby Atmos mix is on Blu-Ray, alongside more rarities (plus the 2014 edition's digital content). Collectors may well welcome a *Complicated Game* outtake and *That Is The Way* at the right speed. **Wyndham Wallace**

the MOOD
the singles 1981-1984
remastered 2024

THE MOOD
THE SINGLES 1981-1984

SUGARSTAR RECORDS

★★★☆☆

Formed in 1980, The Mood's story might have been very different had their biggest single, *Paris Is One Day Away*, not stalled at No.42. That's a shame because, judging by this compilation featuring tracks recorded for RCA – including some produced by Steve Levine – this was a synth-pop trio capable of writing hugely catchy songs: for evidence, check the irresistible *No-One Left To Blame*. Conversely, the weaker material struggles to cut through, because it sounds lost in time, that time being forever the flimsier side of 1983. **Jonathan Wright**

ABC
how to be a ...
ZILLIONAIRE!

ABC
HOW TO BE A… ZILLIONAIRE

MUSIC ON VINYL

★★★★☆

Reissued on vinyl for the first time since its original 1985 release, ABC's third album is a fascinating time capsule. Dominated by synthesizers and the unmistakable sound of the Fairlight, it's a defiant return to pop form highlighted by the New Romantic swoons *Vanity Kills* and *Be Near Me*. While not everything has aged well – the synthetic horns on *15 Storey Halo* are especially cheesy – *A To Z* features proto-industrial programming from Keith LeBlanc (aka Tackhead), while the capitalism-critiquing lyrics of funk-pop gem *(How To Be A) Millionaire* are still relevant. **AZ**

© Dave Freak

MOSELEY FOLK & ARTS FESTIVAL

MOSELEY PARK, MOSELEY, BIRMINGHAM

29-31 AUGUST

★★★★☆

CLASSIC POP RETURNS TO BIRMINGHAM'S ECLECTIC ANNUAL 'FOLK' FESTIVAL TO CATCH A SERIES OF TOP-DRAW ACTS FROM THE 80s, 90s AND NOUGHTIES

Day one at Birmingham's boutique folk festival, and it remains clear it's very much a 'folk plus...' event with the Haim-like charms of **The Deep Blue** and an early appearance from 90s hitmakers **The Lightning Seeds**.

In an hour set, **Ian Broudie** wastes no time piling up the classics, beginning with *Marvellous* and *Change* before rolling into *Ready Or Not* and the Terry Hall co-write, *Sense*.

Very much a musician with one ear in the 60s, The Byrds' *You Showed Me* (later a hit for The Turtles) is a perfect cover. Combining an infectious shuffle beat with woozy psych-pop tones, it also offers Broudie an opportunity to sneak in a Beatles nod (*All You Need Is Love*).

The set's second cover comes with Wreckless Eric's punk-adjacent *Whole Wide World* – not an obvious choice, yet it also goes down well.

With son Riley (of *The Life Of Riley* fame) on guitar, the Seeds close with the crowd-pleasing singalong *Three Lions*, contender for the greatest footy single of all time. All in all, they deliver a back-of-the-net performance.

Next up on the main stage is indie survivor **Pete Doherty**. Even with his tight backing band (who include The Smiths' sticksman, Mike Joyce), there is always something inherently unpredictable about Doherty. But for those who bought into The Libertines and Babyshambles – and there are plenty here today who clearly did – that's all part of his charm. After pausing to flog his poetry 'zine, Pete signs off with a solid bound through The Smiths' *Panic*.

The opening night closes with **The Waterboys** whose current incarnation sees Mike Scott continue to move away from the spiritual Celtic and Big Music vibes, and onto a lost highway somewhere between Nashville and Memphis.

Fiddle-free and dialling up the guitar, they kick off with a rollicking *Medicine Bow*.

More worked-up classics follow – *Be My Enemy*, *Fisherman's Blues*, *A Girl Called Johnny* – as well as several cuts from Scott's Dennis Hopper project. While cover *Easy Rider 1970* feels weak, *Ten Years Gone*, with Brother Paul Brown on keytar, and *Hopper's On Top (Genius)*, both shine – with the latter definitely deserving of inclusion in future Waterboys setlists.

They close with two further covers: *Wasted Sunset*, featuring distinctively voiced new backing singer (and the song's writer) Barny Fletcher, and a moving take on Prince's *Purple Rain*.

Onto Sunday, we're back to see atmospheric Noughties Mancunians **Doves** close out the festival. Having felt initially nervous about returning to the stage without the presently studio-based Jimi Goodwin, co-founders Andy and Jez Williams do an outstanding job sharing the vocals. With a bearded Jez taking the bulk, they deliver a cracking 90-minute career-spanning set that slides effortlessly from *Cold Dreaming*, a soaring highlight from this year's *Constellations For The Lonely*, to a beefed up take on their early-90s pre-Doves Sub Sub instrumental, *Space Face*. With *Catch The Sun*, *Kingdom Of Rust* and *There Goes The Fear* all towering, it's a commanding performance from the returning heroes. **David Vincent**

> DOVES' CO-FOUNDERS ANDY AND JEZ WILLIAMS DO AN OUTSTANDING JOB SHARING THE VOCALS

SUEDE
ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL, LONDON

14 SEPTEMBER

★★★★½

BRETT ANDERSON'S BEAUTIFUL ONES DELIVER A RIOTOUS SET THAT SHOWCASES THE NEW AND CELEBRATES THE CLASSICS

“YOU! Why aren't you clapping? COME ON!” Out of context, Brett Anderson's genuine fury at a fan for having the audacity not to join the throng clapping along to *Beautiful Ones* as the main set closer of Suede's key concert to launch new LP *Antidepressants* seems brutal.

After 100 minutes of Anderson going fully feral, however, this was the ultimate expression of Brett's Suede frontman persona, 33 years after debut single *The Drowners* launched Britain out of a scene dominated by the anti-glamour of Carter USM and The Wonder Stuff.

Suede took over the various small venues of London arts hub Southbank Centre for a fortnight of gigs, popping up to do an acoustic show in its ballroom, playing *Antidepressants* in full at its club and even singing in the arts theatre without a mic.

The 2,700-capacity Royal Festival Hall is a seated venue which usually hosts classical and arty gigs rather than wired veterans out to get among the crowd, but Anderson doesn't care for such niceties.

Near the start, the singer lays down a marker for how the crowd should join him in losing their inhibitions, demanding of the front half of the audience: “Get up and come down here. Ignore security. IGNORE THEM,” before full-tilt new song *Criminal Ways* is suitably anarchic.

A couple of songs later, he is enjoying *Animal Nitrate* as much as the crowd, dropping his mic to dance about freely, while guitarist Richard Oakes delights in reworking Bernard Butler's riffs, having created plenty of moments worthy of early Suede on their past two albums.

By now, you'll surely be familiar with how much *Antidepressants* and its predecessor, *Autofiction*, are properly vintage Suede: a startling renaissance of fury and frustration. This is no nostalgiafest – most of the set draws from those two new albums – but they're shot through with the spirit of Suede's first three snarling records.

That Suede are on such imperious form allows Anderson to play the wild-eyed frontman to perfection. Make no mistake, this *is* a performance: during a theatrical *I Don't Know How To Reach You*, Anderson and a fan in the balcony try to touch hands from a distance, a moment so histrionic that the singer briefly threatens to dissolve into giggles. Tonight, levity simply will not do, so he waltzes off and resumes the ballad more dramatically.

With Anderson striding into the crowd, his bandmates on stage are equally captivating. As ever, Neil Codling doesn't appear to *do* anything, but if so then how does *The Asphalt World*'s piano sound so beautiful while Anderson rehearses for the microphone-free show by singing it so beautifully, literally without any other accompaniment?

You can slightly pick holes with the running order – *Snowblind* and *Pale Snow* allow the mind to wander – but that's to be pedantic over a show with so many incredible talking points.

“This is bouncy music for bouncy people,” Anderson announces before *The Only Way I Can Love You*. It's an obscure song to end the show on, but woe betide anyone who isn't bouncing... **John Earls**

SETLIST

1. Disintegrate
2. Dancing With The Europeans
3. Antidepressants
4. Criminal Ways
5. Trash
6. Animal Nitrate
7. To The Birds
8. Personality Disorder
9. 15 Again
10. June Rain
11. Broken Music For Broken People
12. The Sadness In You, The Sadness In Me
13. Snowblind
14. Pale Snow
15. I Don't Know How To Reach You
16. Life Is Golden
17. She Still Leads Me On
18. Shadow Self
19. Trance State
20. The Asphalt World
21. So Young
22. Metal Mickey
23. Beautiful Ones

ENCORE

24. The Only Way I Can Love You

OUR SECRETS ARE THE SAME

JIM KERR & CHARLIE BURCHILL

CONSTABLE

★★★★☆

"Since the age of 14, there has been no world for me without Charlie Burchill," writes Jim Kerr at the start of this enjoyable joint autobiography from the twin engines of Simple Minds. Burchill, for his part, bows to no-one in his admiration for his "staunch friend" and "big brother".

Thus the stage is set for a book that's part standard music memoir – charting how two bright young dreamers from the Glasgow tenements dodged "the narrow path that society still lays out for working-class kids" to become stadium-filling 80s rock royalty – and part love story (even if they'd never use the L word themselves).

Written with Graeme Thomson, author of the excellent Minds biography *Themes For Great Cities*, it's also a textbook examination of the life cycle of bands, including an unflinching examination of Simple Minds' 90s wilderness years when, as Kerr recalls, an employee in HMV took great delight in telling him how pathetically few records the band were selling.

For all their candour, though, the pair's unshakable optimism and cast-iron self-belief shines through almost every page. Recalling a disastrous early tour supporting Peter Gabriel, in which they were met with a barrage of flying objects from the hostile crowd, Kerr concludes: "I knew we were right and they were wrong." And they were, of course. **Paul Kirkley**

Jim Kerr & Charlie Burchill
With Graeme Thomson
our secrets are the same
The enduring friendship at the heart of
SIMPLE MINDS

PRINCE: A SIGN O' THE TIMES

JOHN McKIE

BONNIER BOOKS

★★★★☆

It's hard to believe that almost a decade has passed since 2016, music's annus horribilis, which robbed us of legends such as David Bowie, George Michael and Prince. With a slew of books expected over the next year dedicated to celebrating these much-missed icons, John McKie is first off the mark, setting the bar high with his exhaustive portrait of The Purple One.

Despite its slightly misleading title, this is more than a deep dive into his 1987 magnum opus, instead using that seminal album as a frame around which he builds a concise history of Prince's entire career with contributions from over 200 sources including everyone from former band members and session musicians to video directors, hairdressers, photographers, journalists, wardrobe personnel and dancers, all offering their personal experiences with the enigmatic superstar.

Opening each chapter with a *Sign O' The Times* song before expanding into other projects, it's a novel and unique way to tell the story.

Thanks to the countless fresh interviews, the book offers plenty of new information and anecdotes, covering Prince's lesser-known endeavours as well as the obvious big-hitters.

A glowing but refreshingly balanced tribute, across 500+ pages McKie maintains a meticulous standard that his notoriously punctilious subject would be proud of. **Mark Lindores**

PRINCE
JOHN McKIE
A SIGN 'O' THE TIMES

TRULY

LIONEL RICHIE

HARPERCOLLINS

★★★★☆

It's easy to assume that an artist who's been in the business for more than half a century is bulletproof when it comes to confidence. After all, they've likely performed thousands of times, and those millions of records sold surely prove how adored they are. But when Lionel Richie walked onto Glastonbury's Pyramid Stage on 28 June 2015 he was, as he confesses in this, his first autobiography, "a mess of nerves".

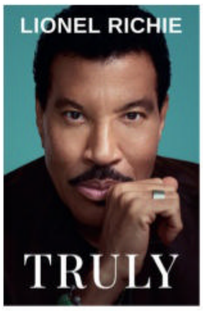
That Legends slot turn at Worthy Farm reawakened interest in this titan of quiet storm (within days, a Best Of compilation shot to No.1 in the UK), and he writes movingly what the reaction of that crowd meant to him.

Characterising himself as "painfully, awkwardly, horribly shy" growing up, Richie broke through as co-lead singer of Motown's The Commodores in the late 60s, before finding even greater success as a solo artist in the 80s.

Though mostly self-effacing, there's a clear pride in his work, describing his most famous numbers as "[the ones that] got me into rooms with world leaders and behind enemy lines in the middle of conflicts, not to mention the untold numbers of guys getting laid on words I've been singing."

This is an assertively positive book – it never veers into politics or bad-mouths anyone – and Richie's breezy, conversational prose style is a joy.

Sorry, Dave Grohl, but Lionel, "Truly," takes the crown as music's nicest man. **Steve O'Brien**



33⅓: COSMIC THING

PETE CRIGHTON

BLOOMSBURY

★★★★☆

This is, incredibly, the 196th title in Bloomsbury's long-running *33 1/3* series and its first on The B-52's.

Formed in Athens, Georgia, in 1976, it took New Wavers Fred Schneider, Kate Pierson, Keith Strickland and Cindy Wilson, 13 years to break big (*Rock Lobster*, celebrated now, only made No.56 in 1978) with the Don Was and Nile Rodgers-produced *Cosmic Thing*, put under the *33 1/3* spotlight by Pete Crighton.

Writing that "We don't talk enough about The B-52s' queerness", the mission here is to reframe the band's fifth album as a vital part of LGBTQ+ history.

Peaking at No.4 US and No.8 in the UK, *Cosmic Thing*'s success was a bittersweet pill for the band, as it was their first album made after the death of founding member Ricky Wilson.

The book is dedicated to him, and his ghost hangs over much of The B-52's story, while also informing Crighton's self-discovery as a gay man.

This book is a deeply personal remembrance of one of 1989's most jubilant albums, one that resonated profoundly with the gay community. He asserts that the band's sexuality (four of the group's initial five members were gay) is rarely discussed, "but we should if we want to understand them and what they meant to the world."

A perennially underrated band, Crighton's book will make you look at The B-52's, and this buoyant, empowering album, in a wholly different light. **SO**

33⅓
COSMIC THING
by Pete Crighton
BLOOMSBURY

CLASSIC
POP
MOMENTS

KYLIE
MINOGUE
THE LOCOMOTION

THE LOCO-MOTION GIVES KYLIE HER STATESIDE BIG BREAK

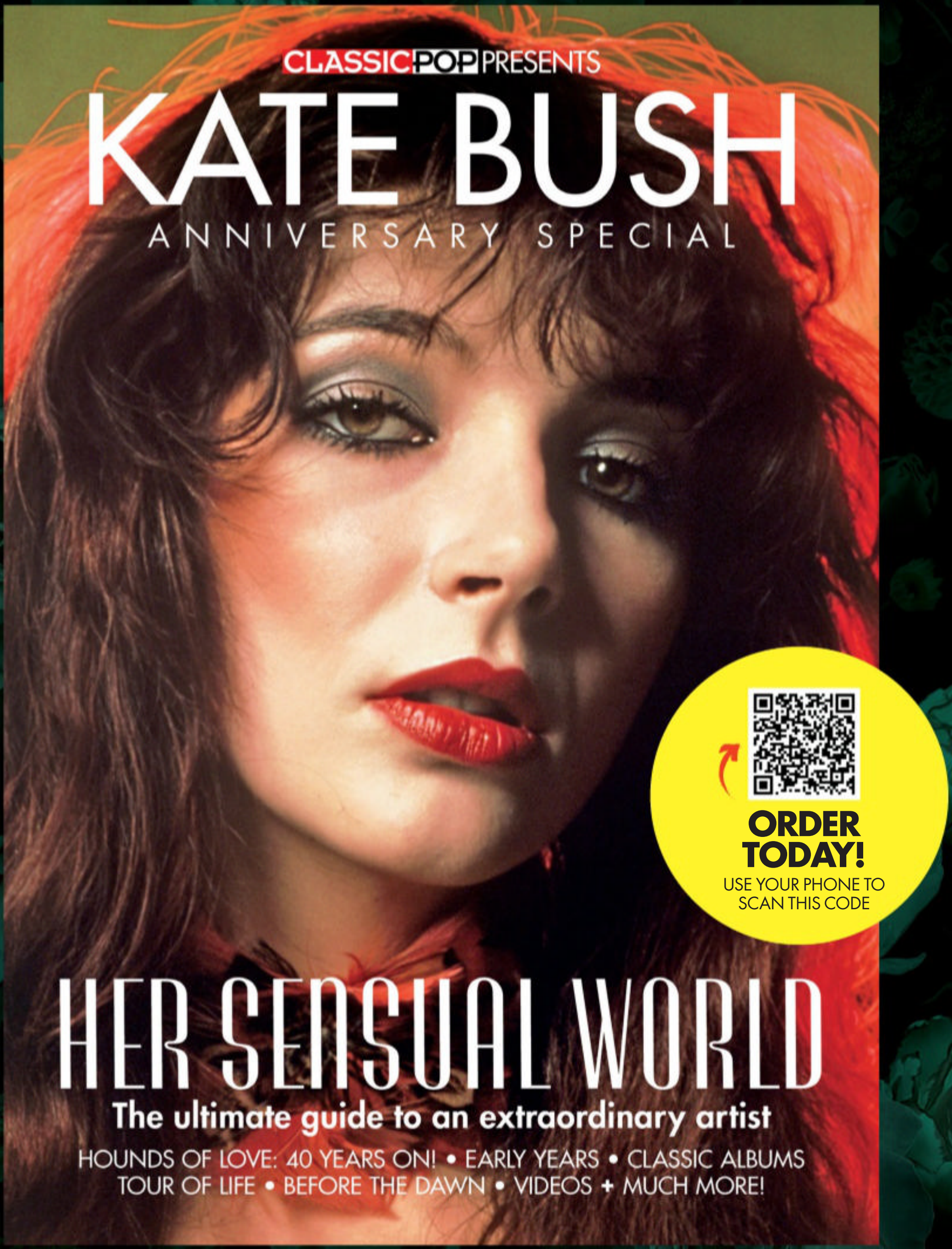
12 NOVEMBER 1988

While she'd cracked the US Top 30 with *I Should Be So Lucky* in July 1988, it would be *The Loco-motion*, released later that year, that gave Kylie Minogue her first bona fide major hit in the States, when it reached No.3 on the Billboard Hot 100. Its impressive chart placing also made history that year, as the first song to reach the US Top 5 in three different decades, with Kylie's Hi-NRG cover following Little Eva's 1962 version and Grand Funk Railroad's 1974 recording.

Of course, Kylie had already waxed the song as *Locomotion* in 1987 as her debut single in Australia, but when it came to releasing the song internationally, Pete Waterman of PWL decided to give it something of a reswizzle, and it was this version (with added hyphen on the 7" label) that became a worldwide smash – it made No.2 in the UK.

The song's success in the States was possibly due to its use in the film *Arthur 2: On The Rocks*, the sequel to Dudley Moore's hit 1981 comedy, and to this day, it remains Kylie's highest-charting US single – *Can't Get You Out Of My Head* is second, peaking at No.7 in 2002.

Speaking on the Zach Sang Show a few years back, the singer admitted that, after *The Loco-motion*'s success, she'd come to resent the track: "I was growing up and there was a time when I was embarrassed, like a sulky teenager, but now when I do *The Loco-motion* it's so celebratory – everybody loves it." **Steve O'Brien**



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